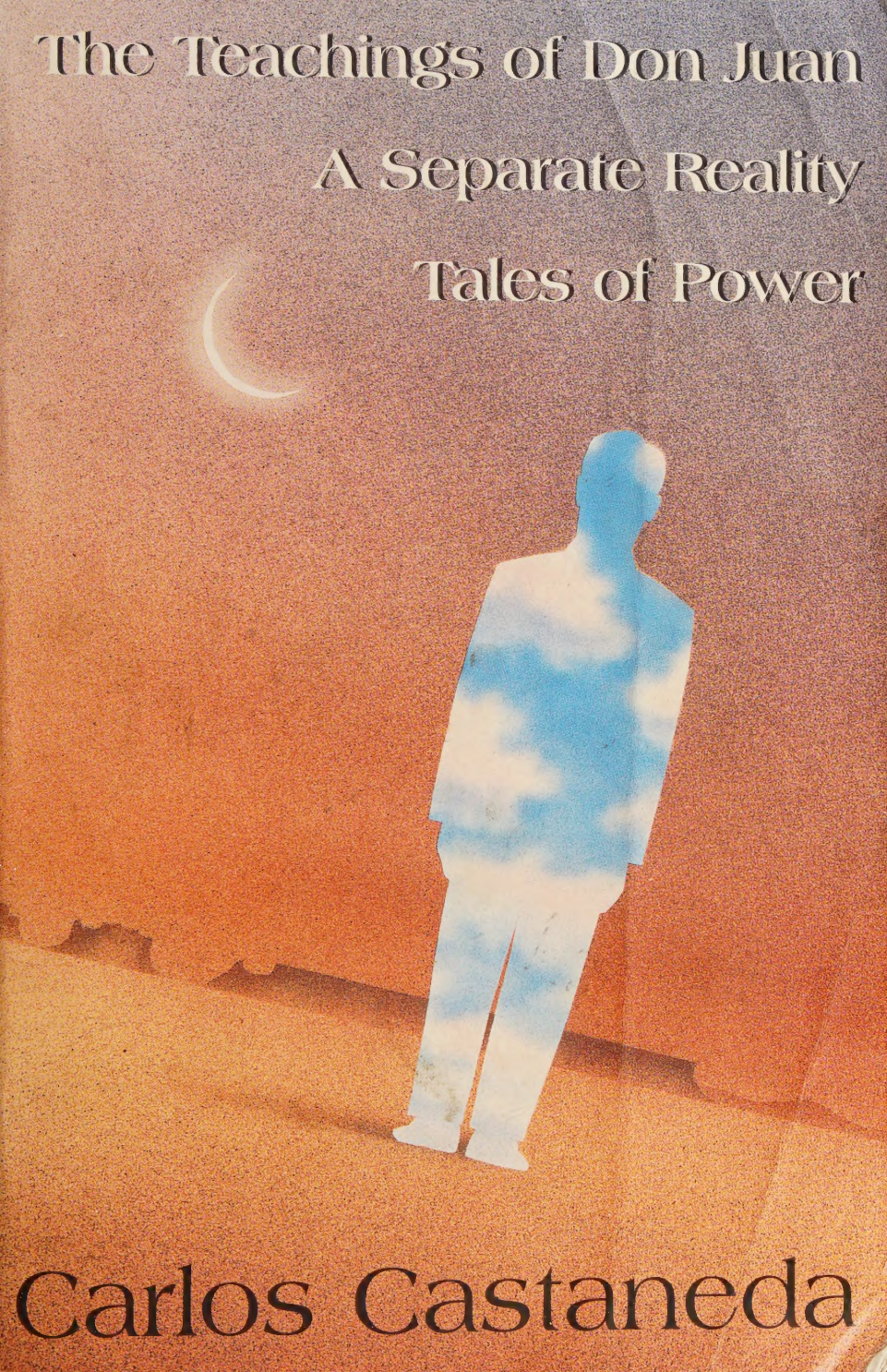
The Teachings of Don Juan

A Separate Reality

Tales of Power



Carlos Castaneda

The Teachings of
Don Juan

✷

A Separate Reality

✷

Tales of Power

BOOKS BY CARLOS CASTANEDA

The Teachings of Don Juan:
A Yaqui Way of Knowledge

A Separate Reality:
Further Conversations with Don Juan

Journey to Ixtlan:
The Lessons of Don Juan

Tales of Power

The Second Ring of Power

The Eagle's Gift

The Fire from Within

The Power of Silence:
Further Lessons of Don Juan

The Art of Dreaming

The Teachings of
Don Juan

✷

A Separate Reality

✷

Tales of Power

Carlos Castaneda

QUALITY PAPERBACK BOOK CLUB
NEW YORK

The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge
Copyright © 1968 by the Regents of the University of California

A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan
Copyright © 1971 by Carlos Castaneda

Tales of Power
Copyright © 1974 by Carlos Castaneda

This edition was specially created in 1995 for Quality Paperback Book Club by arrangement with Simon and Schuster, Inc. This edition copyright © 1995 by Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

The Teachings of Don Juan

A Yaqui Way of Knowledge

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/teachingsofdonju0000carl_p3r6

■

For don Juan—
and for the two persons who shared
his sense of magical time with me

Foreword

This book is both ethnography and allegory.

Carlos Castaneda, under the tutelage of don Juan, takes us through that moment of twilight, through that crack in the universe between daylight and dark into a world not merely other than our own, but of an entirely different order of reality. To reach it he had the aid of *mescalito, yerba del diablo,* and *humito*—peyote, datura, and mushrooms. But this is no mere recounting of hallucinatory experiences, for don Juan's subtle manipulations have guided the traveler while his interpretations give meaning to the events that we, through the sorcerer's apprentice, have the opportunity to experience.

Anthropology has taught us that the world is differently defined in different places. It is not only that people have different customs; it is not only that people believe in different gods and expect different postmortem fates. It is, rather, that the worlds of different peoples have different shapes. The very metaphysical presuppositions differ: space does not conform to Euclidean geometry, time does not form a continuous unidirectional flow, causation does not conform to Aristotelian logic, man is not differentiated from non-man or life from death, as in our world. We know something of the shape of these other worlds from the logic of native languages and from myths and ceremonies, as recorded by anthropologists. Don Juan has shown us glimpses of the world of a Yaqui sorcerer, and because we see it under the influence of hallucinogenic substances, we apprehend it with a reality that is utterly different from those other sources. This is the special virtue of this work.

Castaneda rightly asserts that this world, for all its differences of perception, has its own inner logic. He has tried to explain it from inside, as it were—from within his own rich and intensely personal experiences while under don Juan's tutelage—rather than to examine it in terms of our logic. That he cannot entirely succeed in this is a limitation that our culture and our own language place on perception, rather than his personal limitation; yet in his efforts he bridges for us the world of a Yaqui sorcerer with our own, the world of nonordinary reality with the world of ordinary reality.

The central importance of entering into worlds other than our own

—and hence of anthropology itself—lies in the fact that the experience leads us to understand that our own world is also a cultural construct. By experiencing other worlds, then, we see our own for what it is and are thereby enabled also to see fleetingly what the real world, the one between our own cultural construct and those other worlds, must in fact be like. Hence the allegory, as well as the ethnography. The wisdom and poetry of don Juan, and the skill and poetry of his scribe, give us a vision both of ourselves and of reality. As in all proper allegory, what one sees lies with the beholder, and needs no exegesis here.

Carlos Castaneda's interviews with don Juan were initiated while he was a student of anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. We are indebted to him for his patience, his courage, and his perspicacity in seeking out and facing the challenge of his dual apprenticeship, and in reporting to us the details of his experiences. In this work he demonstrates the essential skill of good ethnography—the capacity to enter into an alien world. I believe he has found a path with heart.

Walter Goldschmidt

Acknowledgments

I wish to express profound gratitude to Professor Clement Meighan, who started and set the course of my anthropological fieldwork; to Professor Harold Garfinkel, who gave me the model and the spirit of exhaustive inquiry; to Professor Robert Edgerton, who criticized my work from its beginning; to Professors William Bright and Pedro Carrasco for their criticisms and encouragement; and to Professor Lawrence Watson for his invaluable help in the clarification of my analysis. Finally, I am grateful to Mrs. Grace Stimson and Mr. F. A. Guilford for their assistance in preparing the manuscript.

Contents

Introduction 1

Part One: THE TEACHINGS 11

Part Two: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS 141

Appendixes 181

Para mi solo recorrer los caminos que tienen corazon, cualquier camino que tenga corazon. Por ahi yo recorro, y la unica prueba que vale es atravesar todo su largo. Y por ahi yo recorro mirando, mirando, sin aliento.
(For me there is only the traveling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge is to traverse its full length. And there I travel looking, looking, breathlessly.)

—DON JUAN

. . . nothing more can be attempted than to establish the beginning and the direction of an infinitely long road. The pretension of any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at least, a self-illusion. Perfection can here be obtained by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see.

—GEORG SIMMEL

Introduction

In the summer of 1960, while I was an anthropology student at the University of California, Los Angeles, I made several trips to the Southwest to collect information on the medicinal plants used by the Indians of the area. The events I describe here began during one of my trips. I was waiting in a border town for a Greyhound bus talking with a friend who had been my guide and helper in the survey. Suddenly he leaned toward me and whispered that the man, a white-haired old Indian, who was sitting in front of the window was very learned about plants, especially peyote. I asked my friend to introduce me to this man.

My friend greeted him, then went over and shook his hand. After they had talked for a while, my friend signaled me to join them, but immediately left me alone with the old man, not even bothering to introduce us. He was not in the least embarrassed. I told him my name and he said that he was called Juan and that he was at my service. He used the Spanish polite form of address. We shook hands at my initiative and then remained silent for some time. It was not a strained silence, but a quietness, natural and relaxed on both sides. Though his dark face and neck were wrinkled, showing his age, it struck me that his body was agile and muscular.

I then told him that I was interested in obtaining information about medicinal plants. Although in truth I was almost totally ignorant about peyote, I found myself pretending that I knew a great deal, and even suggesting that it might be to his advantage to talk with me. As I rattled on, he nodded slowly and looked at me, but said nothing. I avoided his eyes and we finished by standing, the two of us, in dead silence. Finally, after what seemed a very long time, don Juan got up and looked out of the window. His bus had come. He said good-bye and left the station.

I was annoyed at having talked nonsense to him, and at being seen through by those remarkable eyes. When my friend returned he tried to console me for my failure to learn anything from don Juan. He explained that the old man was often silent or noncommittal, but the disturbing effect of this first encounter was not so easily dispelled.

I made a point of finding out where don Juan lived, and later visited him several times. On each visit I tried to lead him to discuss peyote, but

without success. We became, nonetheless, very good friends, and my scientific investigation was forgotten or was at least redirected into channels that were worlds apart from my original intention.

The friend who had introduced me to don Juan explained later that the old man was not a native of Arizona, where we met, but was a Yaqui Indian from Sonora, Mexico.

At first I saw don Juan simply as a rather peculiar man who knew a great deal about peyote and who spoke Spanish remarkably well. But the people with whom he lived believed that he had some sort of "secret knowledge," that he was a "brujo." The Spanish word *brujo* means, in English, medicine man, curer, witch, sorcerer. It connotes essentially a person who has extraordinary, and usually evil, powers.

I had known don Juan for a whole year before he took me into his confidence. One day he explained that he possessed a certain knowledge that he had learned from a teacher, a "benefactor" as he called him, who had directed him in a kind of apprenticeship. Don Juan had, in turn, chosen me to serve as his apprentice, but he warned me that I would have to make a very deep commitment and that the training was long and arduous.

In describing his teacher, don Juan used the word "diablero." Later I learned that diablero is a term used only by the Sonoran Indians. It refers to an evil person who practices black sorcery and is capable of transforming himself into an animal—a bird, a dog, a coyote, or any other creature. On one of my visits to Sonora I had a peculiar experience that illustrated the Indians' feeling about diableros. I was driving at night in the company of two Indian friends when I saw an animal that seemed to be a dog crossing the highway. One of my companions said it was not a dog, but a huge coyote. I slowed down and pulled to the side of the road to get a good look at the animal. It stayed within range of the headlights a few seconds longer and then ran into the chaparral. It was unmistakably a coyote, but it was twice the ordinary size. Talking excitedly, my friends agreed that it was a very unusual animal, and one of them suggested that it might be a diablero. I decided to use an account of the experience to question the Indians of that area about their beliefs in the existence of diableros. I talked with many people, telling them the story and asking them questions. The three conversations that follow indicate what they felt.

"Do you think it was a coyote, Choy?" I asked a young man after he had heard the story.

"Who knows? A dog, no doubt. Too large for a coyote."

"Do you think it may have been a diablero?"

"That's a lot of bull. There are no such things."

"Why do you say that, Choy?"

"People imagine things. I bet if you had caught that animal you would have seen that it was a dog. Once I had some business in another town and got up before daybreak and saddled up a horse. As I was leaving I came upon a dark shadow on the road which looked like a huge animal. My horse reared, throwing me off the saddle. I was pretty scared too, but it turned out that the shadow was a woman who was walking to town."

"Do you mean, Choy, that you don't believe there are diableros?"

"Diableros! What's a diablero? Tell me what a diablero is!"

"I don't know, Choy. Manuel, who was riding with me that night, said the coyote could have been a diablero. Maybe you could tell me what a diablero is?"

"A diablero, they say, is a brujo who changes into any form he wants to adopt. But everybody knows that is pure bull. The old people here are full of stories about diableros. You won't find that among us younger people."

"What kind of animal do you think it was, doña Luz?" I asked a middle-aged woman.

"Only God knows that for sure, but I think it was not a coyote. There are things that appear to be coyotes, but are not. Was the coyote running, or was it eating?"

"It was standing most of the time, but when I first saw it, I think it was eating something."

"Are you sure it was not carrying something in its mouth?"

"Perhaps it was. But tell me, would that make any difference?"

"Yes, it would. If it was carrying something in its mouth it was not a coyote."

"What was it then?"

"It was a man or a woman."

"What do you call such people, doña Luz?"

She did not answer. I questioned her for a while longer, but without success. Finally she said she did not know. I asked her if such people were called diableros, and she answered that "diablero" was one of the names given to them.

"Do you know any diableros?" I asked.

"I knew one woman," she replied. "She was killed. It happened when I was a little girl. The woman, they said, used to turn into a female dog. And one night a dog went into the house of a white man to steal cheese. The white man killed the dog with a shotgun, and at the very

moment the dog died in the house of the white man the woman died in her own hut. Her kin got together and went to the white man and demanded payment. The white man paid good money for having killed her."

"How could they demand payment if it was only a dog he killed?"

"They said that the white man knew it was not a dog, because other people were with him, and they all saw that the dog stood up on its legs like a man and reached for the cheese, which was on a tray hanging from the roof. The men were waiting for the thief because the white man's cheese was being stolen every night. So the man killed the thief knowing it was not a dog."

"Are there any diableros nowadays, doña Luz?"

"Such things are very secret. They say there are no more diableros, but I doubt it, because one member of a diablero's family has to learn what the diablero knows. Diableros have their own laws, and one of them is that a diablero has to teach his secrets to one of his kin."

"What do you think the animal was, Genaro?" I asked a very old man.

"A dog from one of the ranchos of that area. What else?"

"It could have been a diablero!"

"A diablero? You are crazy! There are no diableros."

"Do you mean that there are none today, or that there never were any?"

"At one time there were, yes. It is common knowledge. Everybody knows that. But the people were very afraid of them and had them all killed."

"Who killed them, Genaro?"

"All the people of the tribe. The last diablero I knew about was S——. He killed dozens, maybe even hundreds, of people with his sorcery. We couldn't put up with that and the people got together and took him by surprise one night and burned him alive."

"How long ago was that, Genaro?"

"In nineteen forty-two."

"Did you see it yourself?"

"No, but people still talk about it. They say that there were no ashes left, even though the stake was made of fresh wood. All that was left at the end was a huge pool of grease."

Although don Juan categorized his benefactor as a diablero, he never mentioned the place where he had acquired his knowledge, nor did he identify his teacher. In fact, don Juan disclosed very little about his

personal life. All he said was that he had been born in the Southwest in 1891; that he had spent nearly all his life in Mexico; that in 1900 his family was exiled by the Mexican government to central Mexico along with thousands of other Sonoran Indians; and that he had lived in central and southern Mexico until 1940. Thus, as don Juan had traveled a great deal, his knowledge may have been the product of many influences. And although he regarded himself as an Indian from Sonora, I was not sure whether to place the context of his knowledge totally in the culture of the Sonoran Indians. But it is not my intention here to determine his precise cultural milieu.

I began to serve my apprenticeship to don Juan in June, 1961. Prior to that time I had seen him on various occasions, but always in the capacity of an anthropological observer. During these early conversations I took notes in a covert manner. Later, relying on my memory, I reconstructed the entire conversation. When I began to participate as an apprentice, however, that method of taking notes became very difficult, because our conversations touched on many different topics. Then don Juan allowed me—under strong protest, however—to record openly anything that was said. I would also have liked to take photographs and make tape recordings, but he would not permit me to do so.

I carried out the apprenticeship first in Arizona and then in Sonora, because don Juan moved to Mexico during the course of my training. The procedure I employed was to see him for a few days every so often. My visits became more frequent and lasted longer during the summer months of 1961, 1962, 1963, and 1964. In retrospect, I believe this method of conducting the apprenticeship prevented the training from being successful, because it retarded the advent of the full commitment I needed to become a sorcerer. Yet the method was beneficial from my personal standpoint in that it allowed me a modicum of detachment, and that in turn fostered a sense of critical examination which would have been impossible to attain had I participated continuously, without interruption. In September, 1965, I voluntarily discontinued the apprenticeship.

Several months after my withdrawal, I considered for the first time the idea of arranging my field notes in a systematic way. As the data I had collected were quite voluminous, and included much miscellaneous information, I began by trying to establish a classification system. I divided the data into areas of related concepts and procedures and arranged the areas hierarchically according to subjective importance—that is, in terms of the impact that each of them had had on me. In that way I arrived at the following classification: uses of hallucinogenic

plants; procedures and formulas used in sorcery; acquisition and manipulation of power objects; uses of medicinal plants; songs and legends.

Reflecting upon the phenomena I had experienced, I realized that my attempt at classification had produced nothing more than an inventory of categories; any attempt to refine my scheme would therefore yield only a more complex inventory. That was not what I wanted. During the months following my withdrawal from the apprenticeship, I needed to understand what I had experienced, and what I had experienced was the teaching of a coherent system of beliefs by means of a pragmatic and experimental method. It had been evident to me from the very first session in which I had participated that don Juan's teachings possessed an internal cohesion. Once he had definitely decided to communicate his knowledge to me, he proceeded to present his explanations in orderly steps. To discover that order and to understand it proved to be a most difficult task for me.

My inability to arrive at an understanding seems to have been traceable to the fact that, after four years of apprenticeship, I was still a beginner. It was clear that don Juan's knowledge and his method of conveying it were those of his benefactor; thus my difficulties in understanding his teachings must have been analogous to those he himself had encountered. Don Juan alluded to our similarity as beginners through incidental comments about his incapacity to understand his teacher during his own apprenticeship. Such remarks led me to believe that to any beginner, Indian or non-Indian, the knowledge of sorcery was rendered incomprehensible by the outlandish characteristics of the phenomena he experienced. Personally, as a Western man, I found these characteristics so bizarre that it was virtually impossible to explain them in terms of my own everyday life, and I was forced to the conclusion that any attempt to classify my field data in my own terms would be futile.

Thus it became obvious to me that don Juan's knowledge had to be examined in terms of how he himself understood it; only in such terms could it be made evident and convincing. In trying to reconcile my own views with don Juan's, however, I realized that whenever he tried to explain his knowledge to me, he used concepts that would render it "intelligible" to him. As those concepts were alien to me, trying to understand his knowledge in the way he did placed me in another untenable position. Therefore, my first task was to determine his order of conceptualization. While working in that direction, I saw that don Juan himself had placed particular emphasis on a certain area of his teachings—specifically, the uses of hallucinogenic plants. On the basis of this realization, I revised my own scheme of categories.

Don Juan used, separately and on different occasions, three halluci-

nogenic plants: peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*), Jimson weed (*Datura inoxia* syn. *D. meteloides*), and a mushroom (possibly *Psilocybe mexicana*). Since before their contact with Europeans, American Indians have known the hallucinogenic properties of these three plants. Because of their properties, the plants have been widely employed for pleasure, for curing, for witchcraft, and for attaining a state of ecstasy. In the specific context of his teachings, don Juan related the use of *Datura inoxia* and *Psilocybe mexicana* to the acquisition of power, a power he called an "ally." He related the use of *Lophophora williamsii* to the acquisition of wisdom, or the knowledge of the right way to live.

The importance of the plants was, for don Juan, their capacity to produce stages of peculiar perception in a human being. Thus he guided me into experiencing a sequence of these stages for the purpose of unfolding and validating his knowledge. I have called them "states of nonordinary reality," meaning unusual reality as opposed to the ordinary reality of everyday life. The distinction is based on the inherent meaning of the states of nonordinary reality. In the context of don Juan's knowledge they were considered as real, although their reality was differentiated from ordinary reality.

Don Juan believed the states of nonordinary reality to be the only form of pragmatic learning and the only means of acquiring power. He conveyed the impression that other parts of his teachings were incidental to the acquisition of power. This point of view permeated don Juan's attitude toward everything not directly connected with the states of nonordinary reality. Throughout my field notes there are scattered references to the way don Juan felt. For example, in one conversation he suggested that some objects have a certain amount of power in themselves. Although he himself had no respect for power objects, he said they were frequently used as aids by lesser brujos. I often asked him about such objects, but he seemed totally uninterested in discussing them. When the topic was raised again on another occasion, however, he reluctantly consented to talk about them.

"There are certain objects that are permeated with power," he said. "There are scores of such objects which are fostered by powerful men with the aid of friendly spirits. These objects are tools—not ordinary tools, but tools of death. Yet they are only instruments; they have no power to teach. Properly speaking, they are in the realm of war objects designed for strife; they are made to kill, to be hurled."

"What kind of objects are they, don Juan?"

"They are not really objects; rather, they are types of power."

"How can one get those types of power, don Juan?"

"That depends on the kind of object you want."

"How many kinds are there?"

"As I have already said, there are scores of them. Anything can be a power object."

"Well, which are the most powerful, then?"

"The power of an object depends on its owner, on the kind of man he is. A power object fostered by a lesser brujo is almost a joke; on the other hand, a strong, powerful brujo gives his strength to his tools."

"Which power objects are most common, then? Which ones do most brujos prefer?"

"There are no preferences. They are all power objects, all just the same."

"Do you have any yourself, don Juan?"

He did not answer; he just looked at me and laughed. He remained quiet for a long time, and I thought my questions were annoying him.

"There are limitations on those types of powers," he went on. "But such a point is, I am sure, incomprehensible to you. It has taken me nearly a lifetime to understand that, by itself, an ally can reveal all the secrets of these lesser powers, rendering them rather childish. I had tools like that at one time, when I was very young."

"What power objects did you have?"

"Maíz-pinto, crystals, and feathers."

"What is maíz-pinto, don Juan?"

"It is a small kernel of corn which has a streak of red color in its middle."

"Is it a single kernel?"

"No. A brujo owns forty-eight kernels."

"What do the kernels do, don Juan?"

"Each one of them can kill a man by entering into his body."

"How does a kernel enter into a human body?"

"It is a power object and its power consists, among other things, in entering into the body."

"What does it do when it enters into the body?"

"It immerses itself in the body; it settles on the chest, or on the intestines. The man becomes ill, and unless the brujo who is tending him is stronger than the bewitcher, he will die within three months from the moment the kernel entered into his body."

"Is there any way of curing him?"

"The only way is to suck the kernel out, but very few brujos would dare to do that. A brujo may succeed in sucking the kernel out, but unless he is powerful enough to repel it, it will get inside him and will kill him instead."

"But how does a kernel manage to enter into someone's body?"

"To explain that I must tell you about corn witchcraft, which is one of the most powerful witchcrafts I know. The witchcraft is done by two kernels. One of them is put inside a fresh bud of a yellow flower. The flower is then set on a spot where it will come into contact with the victim: the road on which he walks every day, or any place where he is habitually present. As soon as the victim steps on the kernel, or touches it in any way, the witchcraft is done. The kernel immerses itself in the body."

"What happens to the kernel after the man has touched it?"

"All its power goes inside the man, and the kernel is free. It becomes just another kernel. It may be left at the site of the witchcraft, or it may be swept away; it does not matter. It is better to sweep it away into the underbrush, where a bird will eat it."

"Can a bird eat it before the man touches it?"

"No. No bird is that stupid, I assure you. The birds stay away from it."

Don Juan then described a very complex procedure by which such power kernels can be obtained.

"You must bear in mind that maíz-pinto is merely an instrument, not an ally," he said. "Once you make that distinction you will have no problem. But if you consider such tools to be supreme, you will be a fool."

"Are the power objects as powerful as an ally?" I asked.

Don Juan laughed scornfully before answering. It seemed that he was trying hard to be patient with me.

"Maíz-pinto, crystals, and feathers are mere toys in comparison with an ally," he said. "These power objects are necessary only when a man does not have an ally. It is a waste of time to pursue them, especially for you. You should be trying to get an ally; when you succeed, you will understand what I am telling you now. Power objects are like a game for children."

"Don't get me wrong, don Juan," I protested. "I want to have an ally, but I also want to know everything I can. You yourself have said that knowledge is power."

"No!" he said emphatically. "Power rests on the kind of knowledge one holds. What is the sense of knowing things that are useless?"

In don Juan's system of beliefs, the acquisition of an ally meant exclusively the exploitation of the states of nonordinary reality he produced in me through the use of hallucinogenic plants. He believed that by focusing on these states and omitting other aspects of the knowledge

he taught I would arrive at a coherent view of the phenomena I had experienced.

I have therefore divided this book into two parts. In the first part I present selections from my field notes dealing with the states of nonordinary reality I underwent during my apprenticeship. As I have arranged my notes to fit the continuity of the narrative, they are not always in proper chronological sequence. I never wrote my description of a state of nonordinary reality until several days after I had experienced it, waiting until I was able to treat it calmly and objectively. My conversations with don Juan, however, were taken down as they occurred, immediately after each state of nonordinary reality. My reports of these conversations, therefore, sometimes antedate the full description of an experience.

My field notes disclose the subjective version of what I perceived while undergoing the experience. That version is presented here just as I narrated it to don Juan, who demanded a complete and faithful recollection of every detail and a full recounting of each experience. At the time of recording these experiences, I added incidental details in an attempt to recapture the total setting of each state of nonordinary reality. I wanted to describe the emotional impact I had experienced as completely as possible.

My field notes also reveal the content of don Juan's system of beliefs. I have condensed long pages of questions and answers between don Juan and myself in order to avoid reproducing the repetitiveness of conversation. But as I also want to reflect accurately the overall mood of our exchanges, I have deleted only dialogue that contributed nothing to my understanding of his way of knowledge. The information don Juan gave me about his way of knowledge was always sporadic, and for every spurt on his part there were hours of probing on mine. Nevertheless, there were innumerable occasions on which he freely expounded his knowledge.

In the second part of this book I present a structural analysis drawn exclusively from the data reported in the first part. Through my analysis I seek to support the following contentions: (1) don Juan presented his teachings as a system of logical thought; (2) the system made sense only if examined in the light of its structural units; and (3) the system was devised to guide an apprentice to a level of conceptualization which explained the order of the pheonmena he had experienced.

Part One

THE TEACHINGS

1

My notes on my first session with don Juan are dated June 23, 1961. That was the occasion when the teachings began. I had seen him several times previously in the capacity of an observer only. At every opportunity I had asked him to teach me about peyote. He ignored my request every time, but he never completely dismissed the subject, and I interpreted his hesitancy as a possibility that he might be inclined to talk about his knowledge with more coaxing.

In this particular session he made it obvious to me that he might consider my request provided I possessed clarity of mind and purpose in reference to what I had asked him. It was impossible for me to fulfill such a condition, for I had asked him to teach me about peyote only as a means of establishing a link of communication with him. I thought his familiarity with the subject might predispose him to be more open and willing to talk, thus allowing me an entrance into his knowledge on the properties of plants. He had interpreted my request literally, however, and was concerned about my purpose in wishing to learn about peyote.

Friday, June 23, 1961

"Would you teach me about peyote, don Juan?"

"Why would you like to undertake such learning?"

"I really would like to know about it. Is not just to want to know a good reason?"

"No! You must search in your heart and find out why a young man like you wants to undertake such a task of learning."

"Why did you learn about it yourself, don Juan?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Maybe we both have the same reasons."

"I doubt that. I am an Indian. We don't have the same paths."

"The only reason I have is that I *want* to learn about it, just to know. But I assure you, don Juan, my intentions are not bad."

"I believe you. I've smoked you."

"I beg your pardon!"

"It doesn't matter now. I know your intentions."

"Do you mean you saw through me?"

"You could put it that way."

"Will you teach me, then?"

"No!"

"Is it because I'm not an Indian?"

"No. It is because you don't know your heart. What is important is that you know exactly why you want to involve yourself. Learning about 'Mescalito' is a most serious act. If you were an Indian your desire alone would be sufficient. Very few Indians have such a desire."

Sunday, June 25, 1961

I stayed with don Juan all afternoon on Friday. I was going to leave about 7 P.M. We were sitting on the porch in front of his house and I decided to ask him once more about the teaching. It was almost a routine question and I expected him to refuse again. I asked him if there was a way in which he could accept just my desire to learn, as if I were an Indian. He took a long time to answer. I was compelled to stay because he seemed to be trying to decide something.

Finally he told me that there was a way, and proceeded to delineate a problem. He pointed out that I was very tired sitting on the floor, and that the proper thing to do was to find a "spot" (*sitio*) on the floor where I could sit without fatigue. I had been sitting with my knees up against my chest and my arms locked around my calves. When he said I was tired, I realized that my back ached and that I was quite exhausted.

I waited for him to explain what he meant by a "spot," but he made no overt attempt to elucidate the point. I thought that perhaps he meant that I should change positions, so I got up and sat closer to him. He protested my movement and clearly emphasized that a spot meant a place where a man could feel naturally happy and strong. He patted the place where he sat and said it was his own spot, adding that he had posed a riddle I had to solve by myself without any further deliberation.

What he had posed as a problem to be solved was certainly a riddle. I had no idea how to begin or even what he had in mind. Several times I asked for a clue, or at least a hint, as to how to proceed in locating a point where I felt happy and strong. I insisted and argued that I had no idea what he really meant because I couldn't conceive the problem. He suggested I walk around the porch until I found the spot.

I got up and began to pace the floor. I felt silly and sat down in front of him.

He became very annoyed with me and accused me of not listening, saying that perhaps I did not want to learn. After a while he calmed down and explained to me that not every place was good to sit or be on, and that within the confines of the porch there was one spot that was

unique, a spot where I could be at my very best. It was my task to distinguish it from all the other places. The general pattern was that I had to "feel" all the possible spots that were accessible until I could determine without a doubt which was the right one.

I argued that although the porch was not too large (12 × 8 feet), the number of possible spots was overwhelming, and it would take me a very long time to check all of them, and that since he had not specified the size of the spot, the possibilities might be infinite. My arguments were futile. He got up and very sternly warned me that it might take me days to figure it out, but that if I did not solve the problem, I might as well leave because he would have nothing to say to me. He emphasized that he knew where my spot was, and that therefore I could not lie to him; he said this was the only way he could accept my desire to learn about Mescalito as a valid reason. He added that nothing in his world was a gift, that whatever there was to learn had to be learned the hard way.

He went around the house to the chaparral to urinate. He returned directly into his house through the back.

I thought the assignment to find the alleged spot of happiness was his own way of dismissing me, but I got up and started to pace back and forth. The sky was clear. I could see everything on and near the porch. I must have paced for an hour or more, but nothing happened to reveal the location of the spot. I got tired of walking and sat down; after a few minutes I sat somewhere else, and then at another place, until I had covered the whole floor in a semisystematic fashion. I deliberately tried to "feel" differences between places, but I lacked the criteria for differentiation. I felt I was wasting my time, but I stayed. My rationalization was that I had come a long way just to see don Juan, and I really had nothing else to do.

I lay down on my back and put my hands under my head like a pillow. Then I rolled over and lay on my stomach for a while. I repeated this rolling process over the entire floor. For the first time I thought I had stumbled upon a vague criterion. I felt warmer when I lay on my back.

I rolled again, this time in the opposite direction, and again covered the length of the floor, lying face down on all the places where I had lain face up during my first rolling tour. I experienced the same warm and cold sensations, depending on my position, but there was no difference between spots.

Then an idea occurred to me which I thought to be brilliant: don Juan's spot! I sat there, and then lay, face down at first, and later on my back, but the place was just like all the others. I stood up. I had had

enough. I wanted to say good-bye to don Juan, but I was embarrassed to wake him up. I looked at my watch. It was two o'clock in the morning! I had been rolling for six hours.

At that moment don Juan came out and went around the house to the chaparral. He came back and stood at the door. I felt utterly dejected, and I wanted to say something nasty to him and leave. But I realized that it was not his fault; that it was my own choice to go through all that nonsense. I told him I had failed; I had been rolling on his floor like an idiot all night and still couldn't make any sense of his riddle.

He laughed and said that it did not surprise him because I had not proceeded correctly. I had not been using my eyes. That was true, yet I was very sure he had said to feel the difference. I brought that point up, but he argued that one can feel with the eyes, when the eyes are not looking right into things. As far as I was concerned, he said, I had no other means to solve this problem but to use all I had—my eyes.

He went inside. I was certain that he had been watching me. I thought there was no other way for him to know that I had not been using my eyes.

I began to roll again, because that was the most comfortable procedure. This time, however, I rested my chin on my hands and looked at every detail.

After an interval the darkness around me changed. When I focused on the point directly in front of me, the whole peripheral area of my field of vision became brilliantly colored with a homogeneous greenish yellow. The effect was startling. I kept my eyes fixed on the point in front of me and began to crawl sideways on my stomach, one foot at a time.

Suddenly, at a point near the middle of the floor, I became aware of another change in hue. At a place to my right, still in the periphery of my field of vision, the greenish yellow became intensely purple. I concentrated my attention on it. The purple faded into a pale, but still brilliant, color which remained steady for the time I kept my attention on it.

I marked the place with my jacket, and called don Juan. He came out to the porch. I was truly excited; I had actually seen the change in hues. He seemed unimpressed, but told me to sit on the spot and report to him what kind of feeling I had.

I sat down and then lay on my back. He stood by me and asked me repeatedly how I felt; but I did not feel anything different. For about fifteen minutes I tried to feel or to see a difference, while don Juan stood by me patiently. I felt disgusted. I had a metallic taste in my mouth. Suddenly I had developed a headache. I was about to get sick. The

thought of my nonsensical endeavors irritated me to a point of fury. I got up.

Don Juan must have noticed my profound frustration. He did not laugh, but very seriously stated that I had to be inflexible with myself if I wanted to learn. Only two choices were open to me, he said: either to quit and go home, in which case I would never learn, or to solve the riddle.

He went inside again. I wanted to leave immediately, but I was too tired to drive; besides, perceiving the hues had been so startling that I was sure it was a criterion of some sort, and perhaps there were other changes to be detected. Anyway, it was too late to leave. So I sat down, stretched my legs back, and began all over again.

During this round I moved rapidly through each place, passing don Juan's spot, to the end of the floor, and then turned around to cover the outer edge. When I reached the center, I realized that another change in coloration was taking place, again on the edge of my field of vision. The uniform chartreuse I was seeing all over the area turned, at one spot to my right, into a sharp verdigris. It remained for a moment and then abruptly metamorphosed into another steady hue, different from the other one I had detected earlier. I took off one of my shoes and marked the point, and kept on rolling until I had covered the floor in all possible directions. No other change of coloration took place.

I came back to the point marked with my shoe, and examined it. It was located five to six feet away from the spot marked by my jacket, in a southeasterly direction. There was a large rock next to it. I lay down there for quite some time trying to find clues, looking at every detail, but I did not feel anything different.

I decided to try the other spot. I quickly pivoted on my knees and was about to lie down on my jacket when I felt an unusual apprehension. It was more like a physical sensation of something actually pushing on my stomach. I jumped up and retreated in one movement. The hair on my neck pricked up. My legs had arched slightly, my trunk was bent forward, and my arms stuck out in front of me rigidly with my fingers contracted like a claw. I took notice of my strange posture and my fright increased.

I walked back involuntarily and sat down on the rock next to my shoe. From the rock, I slumped to the floor. I tried to figure out what had happened to cause me such a fright. I thought it must have been the fatigue I was experiencing. It was nearly daytime. I felt silly and embarrassed. Yet I had no way to explain what had frightened me, nor had I figured out what don Juan wanted.

I decided to give it one last try. I got up and slowly approached the place marked by my jacket, and again I felt the same apprehension. This time I made a strong effort to control myself. I sat down, and then knelt in order to lie face down, but I could not lie in spite of my will. I put my hands on the floor in front of me. My breathing accelerated; my stomach was upset. I had a clear sensation of panic, and fought not to run away. I thought don Juan was perhaps watching me. Slowly I crawled back to the other spot and propped my back against the rock. I wanted to rest for a while to organize my thoughts, but I fell asleep.

I heard don Juan talking and laughing above my head. I woke up.

"You have found the spot." he said.

I did not understand him at first, but he assured me again that the place where I had fallen asleep was the spot in question. He again asked me how I felt lying there. I told him I really did not notice any difference.

He asked me to compare my feelings at that moment with what I had felt while lying on the other spot. For the first time it occurred to me that I could not possibly explain my apprehension of the preceding night. He urged me in a kind of challenging way to sit on the other spot. For some inexplicable reason I was actually afraid of the other place, and did not sit on it. He asserted that only a fool could fail to see the difference.

I asked him if each of the two spots had a special name. He said that the good one was called the *sitio* and the bad one the enemy; he said these two places were the key to a man's well-being, especially for a man who was pursuing knowledge. The sheer act of sitting on one's spot created superior strength; on the other hand, the enemy weakened a man and could even cause his death. He said I had replenished my energy, which I had spent lavishly the night before, by taking a nap on my spot.

He also said that the colors I had seen in association with each specific spot had the same overall effect either of giving strength or of curtailing it.

I asked him if there were other spots for me like the two I had found, and how I should go about finding them. He said that many places in the world would be comparable to those two, and that the best way to find them was by detecting their respective colors.

It was not clear to me whether or not I had solved the problem, and in fact I was not even convinced that there had been a problem; I could not avoid feeling that the whole experience was forced and arbitrary. I was certain that don Juan had watched me all night and then proceeded to humor me by saying that wherever I had fallen asleep *was* the place I was looking for. Yet I failed to see a logical reason for such an act, and

when he challenged me to sit on the other spot I could not do it. There was a strange cleavage between my pragmatic experience of fearing the "other spot" and my rational deliberations about the total event.

Don Juan, on the other hand, was very sure I had succeeded, and, acting in accordance with my success, let me know he was going to teach me about peyote.

"You asked me to teach you about Mescalito," he said. "I wanted to find out if you had enough backbone to meet him face to face. Mescalito is not something to make fun of. You must have command over your resources. Now I know I can take your desire alone as a good reason to learn."

"You really are going to teach me about peyote?"

"I prefer to call him Mescalito. Do the same."

"When are you going to start?"

"It is not so simple as that. You must be ready first."

"I think I am ready."

"This is not a joke. You must wait until there is no doubt, and then you will meet him."

"Do I have to prepare myself?"

"No. You simply have to wait. You may give up the whole idea after a while. You get tired easily. Last night you were ready to quit as soon as it got difficult. Mescalito requires a very serious intent."

2

Monday, August 7, 1961

I arrived at don Juan's house in Arizona about seven o'clock on Friday night. Five other Indians were sitting with him on the porch of his house. I greeted him and sat waiting for them to say something. After a formal silence one of the men got up, walked over to me, and said, "Buenas noches." I stood up and answered, "Buenas noches." Then all the other men got up and came to me and we all mumbled "buenas noches" and shook hands either by barely touching one another's fingertips or by holding the hand for an instant and then dropping it quite abruptly.

We all sat down again. They seemed to be rather shy—at a loss for words, although they all spoke Spanish.

It must have been about half past seven when suddenly they all got up and walked toward the back of the house. Nobody had said a word for a long time. Don Juan signaled me to follow and we all got inside an old pickup truck parked there. I sat in the back with don Juan and two younger men. There were no cushions or benches and the metal floor was painfully hard, especially when we left the highway and got onto a dirt road. Don Juan whispered that we were going to the house of one of his friends who had seven mescalitos for me.

I asked him, "Don't you have any of them yourself, don Juan?"

"I do, but I couldn't offer them to you. You see, someone else has to do this."

"Can you tell me why?"

"Perhaps you are not agreeable to 'him' and 'he' won't like you, and then you will never be able to know 'him' with affection, as one should; and our friendship will be broken."

"Why wouldn't he like me? I have never done anything to him."

"You don't have to *do* anything to be liked or disliked. He either takes you, or throws you away."

"But, if he doesn't take me, isn't there anything I can do to make him like me?"

The other two men seemed to have overheard my question and laughed.

"No! I can't think of anything one can do," don Juan said.

He turned half away from me and I could not talk to him anymore.

We must have driven for at least an hour before we stopped in front of a small house. It was quite dark, and after the driver had turned off the headlights I could make out only the vague contour of the building.

A young woman, a Mexican, judging by her speech inflection, was yelling at a dog to make him stop barking. We got out of the truck and walked into the house. The men mumbled "Buenas noches" as they went by her. She answered back and went on yelling at the dog.

The room was large and was stacked up with a multitude of objects. A dim light from a very small electric bulb rendered the scene quite gloomy. There were quite a few chairs with broken legs and sagging seats leaning against the walls. Three of the men sat down on a couch, which was the largest single piece of furniture in the room. It was very old and had sagged down all the way to the floor; in the dim light it seemed to be red and dirty. The rest of us sat in chairs. We sat in silence for a long time.

One of the men suddenly got up and went into another room. He was perhaps in his fifties, dark, tall, and husky. He came back a moment later with a coffee jar. He opened the lid and handed the jar to me; inside there were seven odd-looking items. They varied in size and consistency. Some of them were almost round, others were elongated. They felt to the touch like the pulp of walnuts, or the surface of cork. Their brownish color made them look like hard, dry nutshells. I handled them, rubbing their surfaces for quite some time.

"This is to be chewed [*esto se masca*]," don Juan said in a whisper.

I had not realized that he had sat next to me until he spoke. I looked at the other men, but no one was looking at me; they were talking among themselves in very low voices. This was a moment of acute indecision and fear. I felt almost unable to control myself.

"I have to go to the bathroom," I said to him. "I'll go outside and take a walk."

He handed me the coffee jar and I put the peyote buttons in it. I was leaving the room when the man who had given me the jar stood up, came to me, and said he had a toilet bowl in the other room.

The toilet was almost against the door. Next to it, nearly touching the toilet, was a large bed which occupied more than half of the room. The woman was sleeping there. I stood motionless at the door for a while, then I came back to the room where the other men were.

The man who owned the house spoke to me in English: "Don Juan says you're from South America. Is there any mescal there?" I told him that I had never even heard of it.

They seemed to be interested in South America and we talked

about the Indians for a while. Then one of the men asked me why I wanted to eat peyote. I told him that I wanted to know what it was like. They all laughed shyly.

Don Juan urged me softly, "Chew it, chew it [*Masca, masca*]."

My hands were wet and my stomach contracted. The jar with the peyote buttons was on the floor by the chair. I bent over, took one at random, and put it in my mouth. It had a stale taste. I bit it in two and started to chew one of the pieces. I felt a strong, pungent bitterness; in a moment my whole mouth was numb. The bitterness increased as I kept on chewing, forcing an incredible flow of saliva. My gums and the inside of my mouth felt as if I had eaten salty, dry meat or fish, which seems to force one to chew more. After a while I chewed the other piece and my mouth was so numb I couldn't feel the bitterness anymore. The peyote button was a bunch of shreds, like the fibrous part of an orange or like sugarcane, and I didn't know whether to swallow it or spit it out. At that moment the owner of the house got up and invited everybody to go out to the porch.

We went out and sat in the darkness. It was quite comfortable outside, and the host brought out a bottle of tequila.

The men were seated in a row with their backs to the wall. I was at the extreme right of the line. Don Juan, who was next to me, placed the jar with the peyote buttons between my legs. Then he handed me the bottle, which was passed down the line, and told me to take some of the tequila to wash away the bitterness.

I spit out the shreds of the first button and took a sip. He told me not to swallow it, but to just rinse out my mouth with it to stop the saliva. It did not help much with the saliva, but it certainly helped to wash away some of the bitterness.

Don Juan gave me a piece of dried apricot, or perhaps it was a dried fig—I couldn't see it in the dark, nor could I taste it—and told me to chew it thoroughly and slowly, without rushing. I had difficulty swallowing it; it felt as if it would not go down.

After a short pause the bottle went around again. Don Juan handed me a piece of crispy dried meat. I told him I did not feel like eating.

"This is not eating," he said firmly.

The pattern was repeated six times. I remember having chewed six peyote buttons when the conversation became very lively; although I could not distinguish what language was spoken, the topic of the conversation, in which everybody participated, was very interesting, and I attempted to listen carefully so that I could take part. But when I tried to speak I realized I couldn't; the words shifted aimlessly about in my mind.

I sat with my back propped against the wall and listened to what

the men were saying. They were talking in Italian, and repeated over and over one phrase about the stupidity of sharks. I thought it was a logical, coherent topic. I had told don Juan earlier that the Colorado River in Arizona was called by the early Spaniards "el rio de los tizones [the river of charred wood]"; and someone misspelled or misread "tizones," and the river was called "el rio de los tiburones [the river of the sharks]." I was sure they were discussing that story, yet it never occurred to me to think that none of them could speak Italian.

I had a very strong desire to throw up, but I don't recall the actual act. I asked if somebody would get me some water. I was experiencing an unbearable thirst.

Don Juan brought me a large saucepan. He placed it on the ground next to the wall. He also brought a little cup or can. He dipped it into the pan and handed it to me, and said I could not drink but should just freshen my mouth with it.

The water looked strangely shiny, glossy, like a thick varnish. I wanted to ask don Juan about it and laboriously I tried to voice my thoughts in English, but then I realized he did not speak English. I experienced a very confusing moment, and became aware of the fact that although there was a clear thought in my mind, I could not speak. I wanted to comment on the strange quality of the water, but what followed next was not speech; it was the feeling of my unvoiced thoughts coming out of my mouth in a sort of liquid form. It was an effortless sensation of vomiting without the contractions of the diaphragm. It was a pleasant flow of liquid words.

I drank. And the feeling that I was vomiting disappeared. By that time all noises had vanished and I found I had difficulty focusing my eyes. I looked for don Juan and as I turned my head I noticed that my field of vision had diminished to a circular area in front of my eyes. This feeling was neither frightening nor discomforting, but, quite to the contrary, it was a novelty; I could literally sweep the ground by focusing on one spot and then moving my head slowly in any direction. When I had first come out to the porch I had noticed it was all dark except for the distant glare of the city lights. Yet within the circular area of my vision everything was clear. I forgot about my concern with don Juan and the other men, and gave myself entirely to exploring the ground with my pinpoint vision.

I saw the juncture of the porch floor and the wall. I turned my head slowly to the right, following the wall, and saw don Juan sitting against it. I shifted my head to the left in order to focus on the water. I found the bottom of the pan; I raised my head slightly and saw a medium-size black dog approaching. I saw him coming toward the water. The dog

began to drink. I raised my hand to push him away from my water; I focused my pinpoint vision on the dog to carry on the movement, and suddenly I saw him become transparent. The water was a shiny, viscous liquid. I saw it going down the dog's throat into his body. I saw it flowing evenly through his entire length and then shooting out through each one of the hairs. I saw the iridescent fluid traveling along the length of each individual hair and then projecting out of the hairs to form a long, white, silky mane.

At that moment I had the sensation of intense convulsions, and in a matter of instants a tunnel formed around me, very low and narrow, hard and strangely cold. It felt to the touch like a wall of solid tinfoil. I found I was sitting on the tunnel floor. I tried to stand up, but hit my head on the metal roof, and the tunnel compressed itself until it was suffocating me. I remember having to crawl toward a sort of round point where the tunnel ended; when I finally arrived, if I did, I had forgotten all about the dog, don Juan, and myself. I was exhausted. My clothes were soaked in a cold, sticky liquid. I rolled back and forth trying to find a position in which to rest, a position where my heart would not pound so hard. In one of those shifts I saw the dog again.

Every memory came back to me at once, and suddenly all was clear in my mind. I turned around to look for don Juan, but I could not distinguish anything or anyone. All I was capable of seeing was the dog becoming iridescent; an intense light radiated from his body. I saw again the water flowing through him, kindling him like a bonfire. I got to the water, sank my face in the pan, and drank with him. My hands were in front of me on the ground and, as I drank, I saw the fluid running through my veins setting up hues of red and yellow and green. I drank more and more. I drank until I was all afire; I was all aglow. I drank until the fluid went out of my body through each pore, and projected out like fibers of silk, and I too acquired a long, lustrous, iridescent mane. I looked at the dog and his mane was like mine. A supreme happiness filled my whole body, and we ran together toward a sort of yellow warmth that came from some indefinite place. And there we played. We played and wrestled until I knew his wishes and he knew mine. We took turns manipulating each other in the fashion of a puppet show. I could make him move his legs by twisting my toes, and every time he nodded his head I felt an irresistible impulse to jump. But his most impish act was to make me scratch my head with my foot while I sat; he did it by flapping his ears from side to side. This action was to me utterly, unbearable funny. Such a touch of grace and irony; such mastery, I thought. The euphoria that possessed me was indescribable. I laughed until it was almost impossible to breathe.

I had the clear sensation of not being able to open my eyes; I was looking through a tank of water. It was a long and very painful state filled with the anxiety of not being able to wake up and yet being awake. Then slowly the world became clear and in focus. My field of vision became again very round and ample, and with it came an ordinary conscious act, which was to turn around and look for that marvelous being. At this point I encountered the most difficult transition. The passage from my normal state had taken place almost without my realizing it: I was aware; my thoughts and feelings were a corollary of that awareness; and the passing was smooth and clear. But this second change, the awakening to serious, sober consciousness, was genuinely shocking. I had forgotten I was a man! The sadness of such an irreconcilable situation was so intense that I wept.

Saturday, August 5, 1961

Later that morning, after breakfast, the owner of the house, don Juan, and I drove back to don Juan's place. I was very tired, but I couldn't go to sleep in the truck. Only after the man had left did I fall asleep on the porch of don Juan's house.

When I woke up it was dark; don Juan had covered me up with a blanket. I looked for him, but he was not in the house. He came later with a pot of fried beans and a stack of tortillas. I was extremely hungry.

After we had finished eating and were resting he asked me to tell him all that had happened to me the night before. I related my experience in great detail and as accurately as possible.

When I finished he nodded his head and said, "I think you are fine. It is difficult for me to explain now how and why. But I think it went all right for you. You see, sometimes he is playful, like a child; at other times he is terrible, fearsome. He either frolics, or he is dead serious. It is impossible to know beforehand what he will be like with another person. Yet, when one knows him well—sometimes. You played with him tonight. You are the only person I know who has had such an encounter."

"In what way does my experience differ from that of others?"

"You're not an Indian; therefore it is hard for me to figure out what is what. Yet he either takes people or rejects them, regardless of whether they are Indians or not. That I know. I have seen numbers of them. I also know that he frolics, he makes some people laugh, but never have I seen him play with anyone."

"Can you tell me now, don Juan, how does peyote protect . . ."

He did not let me finish. Vigorously he touched me on the shoulder.

"Don't you ever name him that way. You haven't seen enough of him yet to know him."

"How does Mescalito protect people?"

"He advises. He answers whatever questions you ask."

"Then Mescalito is real? I mean he is something you can see?"

He seemed to be baffled by my question. He looked at me with a sort of blank expression.

"What I meant to say, is that Mescalito . . ."

"I heard what you said. Didn't you see him last night?"

I wanted to say that I saw only a dog, but I noticed his bewildered look.

"Then you think what I saw last night was him?"

He looked at me with contempt. He chuckled, shook his head as though he couldn't believe it, and in a very belligerent tone he added, "A poco crees que era tu—mamá [Don't tell me you believe it was your—mama]?" He paused before saying "mamá" because what he meant to say was "tu chingada madre," an idiom used as a disrespectful allusion to the other party's mother. The word "mamá" was so incongruous that we both laughed for a long time.

Then I realized he had fallen asleep and had not answered my question.

Sunday, August 6, 1961

I drove don Juan to the house where I had taken peyote. On the way he told me that the name of the man who had "offered me to Mescalito" was John. When we got to the house we found John sitting on his porch with two young men. All of them were extremely jovial. They laughed and talked with great ease. The three of them spoke English perfectly. I told John that I had come to thank him for having helped me.

I wanted to get their views on my behavior during the hallucinogenic experience, and told them I had been trying to think of what I had done that night and that I couldn't remember. They laughed and were reluctant to talk about it. They seemed to be holding back on account of don Juan. They all glanced at him as though waiting for an affirmative cue to go on. Don Juan must have cued them, although I did not notice anything, because suddenly John began to tell me what I had done that night.

He said he knew I had been "taken" when he heard me puking. He estimated that I must have puked thirty times. Don Juan corrected him and said it was only ten times.

John continued: "Then we all moved next to you. You were stiff, and were having convulsions. For a very long time, while lying on your back, you moved your mouth as though talking. Then you began to bump your head on the floor, and don Juan put an old hat on your head

and you stopped it. You shivered and whined for hours, lying on the floor. I think everybody fell asleep then; but I heard you puffing and groaning in my sleep. Then I heard you scream and I woke up. I saw you leaping up in the air, screaming. You made a dash for the water, knocked the pan over, and began to swim in the puddle.

"Don Juan brought you more water. You sat quietly in front of the pan. Then you jumped up and took off all your clothes. You were kneeling in front of the water, drinking in big gulps. Then you just sat there and stared into space. We thought you were going to be there forever. Nearly everybody was asleep, including don Juan, when suddenly you jumped up again, howling, and took after the dog. The dog got scared and howled too, and ran to the back of the house. Then everybody woke up.

"We all got up. You came back from the other side still chasing the dog. The dog was running ahead of you barking and howling. I think you must have gone twenty times around the house, running in circles, barking like a dog. I was afraid people were going to be curious. There are no neighbors close, but your howling was so loud it could have been heard for miles."

One of the young men added, "You caught up with the dog and brought it to the porch in your arms."

John continued: "Then you began to play with the dog. You wrestled with him, and the dog and you bit each other and played. That, I thought, was funny. My dog does not play usually. But this time you and the dog were rolling on each other."

"Then you ran to the water and the dog drank with you," the young man said. "You ran five or six times to the water with the dog."

"How long did this go on?" I asked.

"Hours," John said. "At one time we lost sight of you two. I think you must have run to the back. We just heard you barking and groaning. You sounded so much like a dog that we couldn't tell you two apart."

"Maybe it was just the dog alone," I said.

They laughed, and John said, "You were barking there, boy!"

"What happened next?"

The three men looked at one another and seemed to have a hard time deciding what happened next. Finally the young man who had not yet said anything spoke up.

"He choked," he said, looking at John.

"Yes, you certainly choked. You began to cry very strangely, and then you fell to the floor. We thought you were biting your tongue; don Juan opened your jaws and poured water on your face. Then you started shivering and having convulsions all over again. Then you stayed mo-

tionless for a long time. Don Juan said it was all over. By then it was morning, so we covered you with a blanket and left you to sleep on the porch."

He stopped there and looked at the other men who were obviously trying not to laugh. He turned to don Juan and asked him something. Don Juan smiled and answered the question. John turned to me and said, "We left you here on the porch because we were afraid you were going to piss all over the rooms."

They all laughed very loudly.

"What was the matter with me?" I asked. "Did I . . ."

"Did you?" John sort of mimicked me. "We were not going to mention it, but don Juan says it is all right. You pissed all over my dog!"

"What did I do?"

"You don't think the dog was running because he was afraid of you, do you? The dog was running because you were pissing on him."

There was general laughter at this point. I tried to question one of the young men, but they were all laughing and he didn't hear me.

John went on: "My dog got even though; he pissed on you too!"

This statement was apparently utterly funny because they all roared with laughter, including don Juan. When they had quieted down, I asked in all earnestness, "Is it really true? This really happened?"

Still laughing, John replied: "I swear my dog really pissed on you."

Driving back to don Juan's place I asked him: "Did all that really happen, don Juan?"

"Yes," he said, "but they don't know what you saw. They don't realize you were playing with 'him.' That is why I did not disturb you."

"But is this business of the dog and me pissing on each other true?"

"It was not a dog! How many times do I have to tell you that? This is the only way to understand it. It's the only way! It was 'he' who played with you."

"Did you know all this was happening before I told you about it?"

He vacillated for an instant before answering.

"No, I remembered, after you told me about it, the strange way you looked. I just suspected you were doing fine because you didn't seem scared."

"Did the dog really play with me as they say?"

"Goddammit! It was not a dog!"

Thursday, August 17, 1961

I told don Juan how I felt about my experience. From the point of view of my intended work it had been a disastrous event. I said I did not care for another similar "encounter" with Mescalito. I agreed that every-

thing that had happened to me had been more than interesting, but added that nothing in it could really move me toward seeking it again. I seriously believed that I was not constructed for that type of endeavor. Peyote had produced in me, as a postreaction, a strange kind of physical discomfort. It was an indefinite fear or unhappiness; a melancholy of some sort, which I could not define exactly. And I did not find that state noble in any way.

Don Juan laughed and said, "You are beginning to learn."

"This type of learning is not for me. I am not made for it, don Juan."

"You always exaggerate."

"This is not exaggeration."

"It is. The only trouble is that you exaggerate the bad points only."

"There are no good points so far as I am concerned. All I know is that it makes me afraid."

"There is nothing wrong with being afraid. When you fear, you see things in a different way."

"But I don't care about seeing things in a different way, don Juan. I think I am going to leave the learning about Mescalito alone. I can't handle it, don Juan. This is really a bad situation for me."

"Of course it is bad—even for me. You are not the only one who is baffled."

"Why should you be baffled, don Juan?"

"I have been thinking about what I saw the other night. Mescalito actually played with you. That baffled me, because it was an indication [omen]."

"What kind of an indication, don Juan?"

"Mescalito was pointing you out to me."

"What for?"

"It wasn't clear to me then, but now it is. He meant you were the 'chosen man' [*escogido*]. Mescalito pointed you out to me and by doing that he told me you were the chosen man."

"Do you mean I was chosen among others for some task, or something of the sort?"

"No. What I mean is, Mescalito told me you could be the man I am looking for."

"When did he tell you that, don Juan?"

"By playing with you, he told me that. This makes you the chosen man for me."

"What does it mean to be the chosen man?"

"There are some secrets I know [*Tengo secretos*]. I have secrets I won't be able to reveal to anyone unless I find my chosen man. The

other night when I saw you playing with Mescalito it was clear to me you were that man. But you are not an Indian. How baffling!"

"But what does it mean to me, don Juan? What do I have to do?"

"I've made up my mind and I am going to teach you the secrets that make up the lot of a man of knowledge."

"Do you mean the secrets about Mescalito?"

"Yes, but those are not all the secrets I know. There are others, of a different kind, which I would like to give to someone. I had a teacher myself, my benefactor, and I also became his chosen man upon performing a certain feat. He taught me all I know."

I asked him again what this new role would require of me; he said learning was the only thing involved, learning in the sense of what I had experienced in the two sessions with him.

The way in which the situation had evolved was quite strange. I had made up my mind to tell him I was going to give up the idea of learning about peyote, and then before I could really make my point, he offered to teach me his "knowledge." I did not know what he meant by that, but I felt that this sudden turn was very serious. I argued I had no qualifications for such a task, as it required a rare kind of courage which I did not have. I told him that my bent of character was to talk about acts others performed. I wanted to hear his views and opinions about everything. I told him I could be happy if I could sit there and listen to him talk for days. To me, *that* would be learning.

He listened without interrupting me. I talked for a long time. Then he said:

"All this is very easy to understand. Fear is the first natural enemy a man must overcome on his path to knowledge. Besides, you are curious. That evens up the score. And you will learn in spite of yourself; that's the rule."

I protested for a while longer, trying to dissuade him. But he seemed to be convinced there was nothing else I could do but learn.

"You are not thinking in the proper order," he said. "Mescalito actually played with you. That's the point to think about. Why don't you dwell on that instead of on your fear?"

"Was it so unusual?"

"You are the only person I have ever seen playing with him. You are not used to this kind of life; therefore the indications [omens] bypass you. Yet you are a serious person, but your seriousness is attached to what you do, not to what goes on outside you. You dwell upon yourself too much. That's the trouble. And that produces a terrible fatigue."

"But what else can anyone do, don Juan?"

"Seek and see the marvels all around you. You will get tired of

looking at yourself alone, and that fatigue will make you deaf and blind to everything else."

"You have a point, don Juan, but how can I change?"

"Think about the wonder of Mescalito playing with you. Think about nothing else: The rest will come to you of itself."

Sunday, August 20, 1961

Last night don Juan proceeded to usher me into the realm of his knowledge. We sat in front of his house in the dark. Suddenly, after a long silence, he began to talk. He said he was going to advise me with the same words his own benefactor had used the first day he took him as his apprentice. Don Juan had apparently memorized the words, for he repeated them several times, to make sure I did not miss any:

"A man goes to knowledge as he goes to war, wide-awake, with fear, with respect, and with absolute assurance. Going to knowledge or going to war in any other manner is a mistake, and whoever makes it will live to regret his steps."

I asked him why was it so and he said that when a man has fulfilled those four requisites there are no mistakes for which he will have to account; under such conditions his acts lose the blundering quality of a fool's acts. If such a man fails, or suffers a defeat, he will have lost only a battle, and there will be no pitiful regrets over that.

Then he said he intended to teach me about an "ally" in the very same way his own benefactor had taught him. He put strong emphasis on the words "very same way," repeating the phrase several times.

An "ally," he said, is a power a man can bring into his life to help him, advise him, and give him the strength necessary to perform acts, whether big or small, right or wrong. This ally is necessary to enhance a man's life, guide his acts, and further his knowledge. In fact, an ally is the indispensable aid to knowing. Don Juan said this with great conviction and force. He seemed to choose his words carefully. He repeated the following sentence four times:

"An ally will make you see and understand things about which no human being could possibly enlighten you."

"Is an ally something like a guardian spirit?"

"It is neither a guardian nor a spirit. It is an aid."

"Is Mescalito your ally?"

"No! Mescalito is another kind of power. A unique power! A protector, a teacher."

"What makes Mescalito different from an ally?"

"He can't be tamed and used as an ally is tamed and used. Mescalito is outside oneself. He chooses to show himself in many forms to

whoever stands in front of him, regardless of whether that person is a brujo or a farm boy."

Don Juan spoke with deep fervor about Mescalito's being the teacher of the proper way to live. I asked him how Mescalito taught the "proper way of life," and don Juan replied that Mescalito *showed* how to live.

"How does he show it?" I asked.

"He has many ways of showing it. Sometimes he shows it on his hand, or on the rocks, or the trees, or just in front of you."

"Is it like a picture in front of you?"

"No. It is a teaching in front of you."

"Does Mescalito talk to the person?"

"Yes. But not in words."

"How does he talk, then?"

"He talks differently to every man."

I felt my questions were annoying him. I did not ask any more. He went on explaining that there were no exact steps to knowing Mescalito; therefore no one could teach about him except Mescalito himself. This quality made him a unique power; he was not the same for every man.

On the other hand, the acquiring of an ally required, don Juan said, the most precise teaching and the following of stages or steps without a single deviation. There are many such ally powers in the world, he said, but he was familiar with only two of them. And he was going to lead me to them and their secrets, but it was up to me to choose *one* of them, for I could have only one. His benefactor's ally was in *la yerba del diablo* (devil's weed), he said, but he personally did not like it, even though his benefactor had taught him its secrets. His own ally was in the *humito* (the little smoke), he said, but he did not elaborate on the nature of the smoke.

I asked him about it. He remained quiet. After a long pause I asked him:

"What kind of a power is an ally?"

"It is an aid. I have already told you."

"How does it aid?"

"An ally is a power capable of carrying a man beyond the boundaries of himself. This is how an ally can reveal matters no human being could."

"But Mescalito also takes you out of the boundaries of yourself. Doesn't that make him an ally?"

"No. Mescalito takes you out of yourself to teach you. An ally takes you out to give you power."

I asked him to explain this point to me in more detail, or to

describe the difference in effect between the two. He looked at me for a long time and laughed. He said that learning through conversation was not only a waste, but stupidity, because learning was the most difficult task a man could undertake. He asked me to remember the time I had tried to find my spot, and how I wanted to find it without doing any work because I had expected him to hand out all the information. If he had done so, he said, I would never have learned. But, knowing how difficult it was to find my spot, and, above all, knowing that it existed, would give me a unique sense of confidence. He said that while I remained rooted to my "good spot" nothing could cause me bodily harm, because I had the assurance that at that particular spot I was at my very best. I had the power to shove off anything that might be harmful to me. If, however, he had *told* me where it was, I would never have had the confidence needed to claim it as true knowledge. Thus, knowledge was indeed power.

Don Juan said then that every time a man sets himself to learn he has to labor as hard as I did to find that spot, and the limits of his learning are determined by his own nature. Thus he saw no point in talking about knowledge. He said that certain kinds of knowledge were too powerful for the strength I had, and to talk about them would only bring harm to me. He apparently felt there was nothing else he wanted to say. He got up and walked toward his house. I told him the situation overwhelmed me. It was not what I had conceived or wanted it to be.

He said that fears are natural; that all of us experience them and there is nothing we can do about it. But on the other hand, no matter how frightening learning is, it is more terrible to think of a man without an ally, or without knowledge.

3

In the more than two years that elapsed between the time don Juan decided to teach me about the ally powers and the time he thought I was ready to learn about them in the pragmatic, participatory form he considered as learning, he gradually defined the general features of the two allies in question. He prepared me for the indispensable corollary of all the verbalizations, and the consolidation of all the teachings, the states of nonordinary reality.

At first he talked about the ally powers in a very casual manner. The first references I have in my notes are interjected between other topics of conversation.

Wednesday, August 23, 1961

"The devil's weed [Jimson weed] was my benefactor's ally. It could have been mine also, but I didn't like her."

"Why didn't you like the devil's weed, don Juan?"

"She has a serious drawback."

"Is she inferior to other ally powers?"

"No. Don't get me wrong. She is as powerful as the best of allies, but there is something about her which I personally don't like."

"Can you tell me what it is?"

"She distorts men. She gives them a taste of power too soon without fortifying their hearts and makes them domineering and unpredictable. She makes them weak in the middle of their great power."

"Isn't there any way to avoid that?"

"There is a way to overcome it, but not to avoid it. Whoever becomes the weed's ally must pay that price."

"How can one overcome that effect, don Juan?"

"The devil's weed has four heads: the root, the stem and leaves, the flowers, and the seeds. Each one of them is different, and whoever becomes her ally must learn about them in that order. The most important head is in the roots. The power of the devil's weed is conquered through the roots. The stem and leaves are the head that cures maladies; properly used, this head is a gift to mankind. The third head is in the flowers, and it is used to turn people crazy, or to make them obedient, or

to kill them. The man whose ally is the weed never intakes the flowers, nor does he intake the stem and leaves, for that matter, except in cases of his own illness; but the roots and the seeds are always intaken; especially the seeds; they are the fourth head of the devil's weed and the most powerful of the four.

"My benefactor used to say the seeds are the 'sober head'—the only part that could fortify the heart of man. The devil's weed is hard with her protégés, he used to say, because she aims to kill them fast, a thing she ordinarily accomplishes before they can arrive at the secrets of the 'sober head.' There are, however, tales about men who have unraveled the secrets of the sober head. What a challenge for a man of knowledge!"

"Did your benefactor unravel such secrets?"

"No, he didn't."

"Have you met anyone who has done it?"

"No. But they lived at a time when that knowledge was important."

"Do you know anyone who has met such men?"

"No, I don't."

"Did your benefactor know anyone?"

"He did."

"Why didn't he arrive at the secrets of the sober head?"

"To tame the devil's weed into an ally is one of the most difficult tasks I know. She never became one with me, for example, perhaps because I was never fond of her."

"Can you still use her as an ally in spite of not being fond of her?"

"I can; nevertheless, I prefer not to. Maybe it will be different for you."

"Why is it called the devil's weed?"

Don Juan made a gesture of indifference, shrugged his shoulders, and remained quiet for some time. Finally he said that "devil's weed" was her temporary name [*su nombre de leche*]. He also said there were other names for the devil's weed, but they were not to be used, because the calling of a name was a serious matter, especially if one was learning to tame an ally power. I asked him why the calling of a name was so serious a matter. He said names were reserved to be used only when one was calling for help, in moments of great stress and need, and he assured me that such moments happen sooner or later in the life of whoever seeks knowledge.

Sunday, September 3, 1961

Today, during the afternoon, don Juan collected two *Datura* plants from the field.

Quite unexpectedly he brought the subject of the devil's weed into our conversation, and then asked me to go with him to the hills and look for one.

We drove to the nearby mountains. I got a shovel out of the trunk and walked into one of the canyons. We walked for quite a while, wading through the chaparral, which grew thick in the soft, sandy dirt. He stopped next to a small plant with dark-green leaves, and big, whitish, bell-shaped flowers.

"This one," he said.

Immediately he started to shovel. I tried to help him but he refused with a strong shake of the head, and went on to dig a circular hole around the plant: a hole shaped like a cone, deep toward the outer edge and sloping into a mound in the center of the circle. When he stopped digging he knelt close to the stem and with his fingers cleared the soft dirt around it, uncovering about four inches of a big, tuberous, forked root whose width contrasted markedly with the width of the stem, which was frail in comparison.

Don Juan looked at me and said the plant was a "male" because the root forked out from the exact point where it joined the stem. Then he stood up and started to walk away, looking for something.

"What are you looking for, don Juan?"

"I want to find a stick."

I began to look around, but he stopped me.

"Not you! You sit over there." He pointed to some rocks twenty feet away. "I will find it."

He came back after a while with a long, dry branch. Using it as a digging stick, he loosened the dirt carefully along the two diverging branches of the root. He cleaned around them to a depth of approximately two feet. As he dug deeper the dirt became so hard-packed that it was practically impossible to penetrate it with the stick.

He came to a halt and sat down to catch his breath. I sat next to him. We did not talk for a long time.

"Why don't you dig it out with the shovel?" I asked.

"It could cut and injure the plant. I had to get a stick that belonged to this area so that, if I had struck the root, the injury wouldn't have been as bad as one caused by a shovel or a foreign object."

"What kind of a stick did you get?"

"Any dry branch of the paloverde tree would do. If there are no dry branches you have to cut a fresh one."

"Can you use the branches of any other tree?"

"I told you, only paloverde and not any other."

"Why is that so, don Juan?"

"Because the devil's weed has very few friends, and paloverde is the only tree in this area which agrees with her—the only thing that grabs or hooks onto it [*lo unico que prende*]. If you damage the root with a shovel she will not grow for you when you replant her, but if you injure her with such a stick, chances are the plant will not even feel it."

"What are you going to do with the root now?"

"I'm going to cut it. You must leave me. Go find another plant and wait until I call you."

"Don't you want me to help you?"

"You may help me only if I ask you!"

I walked away and started to look for another plant in order to fight the strong desire to sneak around and watch him. After some time he joined me.

"Let us look for the female now," he said.

"How do you tell them apart?"

"The female is taller and grows above the ground so it really looks like a small tree. The male is large and spreads out near the ground and looks more like a thick bush. Once we dig the female out you will see it has a single root going for quite a way before it becomes a fork. The male, on the other hand, has a forked root joined to the stem."

We looked together through the field of daturas. Then, pointing to a plant, he said, "That's a female." And he proceeded to dig it out as he had done the other. As soon as he had cleared the root I was able to see that the root conformed to his prediction. I left him again when he was about to cut it.

When we got to his house he opened the bundle in which he had put the *Datura* plants. He took the larger one, the male, first and washed it in a big metal tray. Very carefully he scrubbed all the dirt from the root, stem, and leaves. After that meticulous cleaning, he severed the stem from the root by making a superficial incision around the width of their juncture with a short, serrated knife and by cracking them apart. He took the stem and separated every part of it by making individual heaps with leaves, flowers, and the prickly seedpods. He threw away everything that was dry or had been spoiled by worms, and kept only those parts that were complete. He tied together the two branches of the root with two pieces of string, cracked them in half after making a superficial cut at the joint, and got two pieces of root of equal size.

He then took a piece of rough burlap cloth and placed in it first the two pieces of root tied together; on top of them he put the leaves in a neat bunch, then the flowers, the seedpods, and the stem. He folded the burlap and made a knot with the corners.

He repeated exactly the same steps with the other plant, the female, except that when he got to the root, instead of cutting it, he left the fork

intact, like an upside-down letter Y. Then he placed all the parts in another cloth bundle. When he finished, it was already dark.

Wednesday, September 6, 1961

Today, late in the afternoon, we returned to the topic of the devil's weed.

"I think we should start with that weed again," don Juan said suddenly.

After a polite silence I asked him, "What are you going to do with the plants?"

"The plants I dug out and cut are mine," he said. "It is as though they were myself; with them I'm going to teach you the way to tame the devil's weed."

"How will you do that?"

"The devil's weed is divided into portions [*partes*]. Each one of these portions is different; each has its unique purpose and service."

He opened his left hand and measured on the floor from the tip of his thumb to the tip of his fourth finger.

"This is my portion. You will measure yours with your own hand. Now, to establish dominion over the devil's weed, you must begin by taking the first portion of the root. But since I have brought you to her, you must take the first portion of the root of *my* plant. I have measured it for you, so it is really *my* portion that you must take at the beginning."

He went inside the house and brought out one of the burlap bundles. He sat down and opened it. I noticed it was the male plant. I also noticed there was only one piece of root. He took the piece that was left from the original set of two and held it in front of my face.

"This is your first portion," he said. "I give it to you. I have cut it myself for you. I have measured it as my own; now I give it to you."

For an instant, the thought that I would have to chew it like a carrot crossed my mind, but he placed it inside a small, white, cotton bag.

He walked to the back of the house. He sat there on the floor with his legs crossed, and with a round *mano* began to mash the root inside the bag. He worked it over a flat slab which served as a mortar. From time to time he washed the two stones, and kept the water in a small, flat, wooden dugout basin.

As he pounded he sang an unintelligible chant, very softly and monotonously. When he had mashed the root into a soft pulp inside the bag, he placed it in the wooden basin. He again placed the slab mortar and the pestle into the basin, filled it with water, and then carried it to a sort of rectangular pig's trough set against the back fence.

He said the root had to soak all night, and had to be left outside the

house so it would catch the night air (*el sereno*). "If tomorrow is a sunny, hot day, it will be an excellent omen," he said.

Sunday, September 10, 1961

Thursday, September 7, was a very clear and hot day. Don Juan seemed very pleased with the good omen and repeated several times that the devil's weed had probably liked me. The root had soaked all night, and about 10:00 A.M. we walked to the back of the house. He took the basin out of the trough, placed it on the ground, and sat next to it. He took the bag and rubbed it on the bottom of the basin. He held it a few inches above the water and squeezed its contents, then dropped the bag into the water. He repeated the same sequence three more times, then discarded the bag, tossing it into the trough, and left the basin in the hot sun.

We came back to it two hours later. He brought with him a medium-size kettle with boiling, yellowish water. He tipped the basin very carefully and emptied the top water, preserving the thick silt that had accumulated on the bottom. He poured the boiling water on the silt and left the basin in the sun again.

This sequence was repeated three times at intervals of more than an hour. Finally he poured out most of the water from the basin, tipped it to an angle to catch the late afternoon sun, and left it.

When we returned hours later, it was dark. On the bottom of the basin there was a layer of gummy substance. It resembled a batch of half-cooked starch, whitish or light gray. There was perhaps a full teaspoon of it. He took the basin inside the house, and while he put some water on to boil, I picked out pieces of dirt the wind had blown into the silt. He laughed at me.

"That little dirt won't hurt anybody."

When the water was boiling he poured about a cup of it into the basin. It was the same yellowish water he had used before. It dissolved the silt, making a sort of milky substance.

"What kind of water is that, don Juan?"

"Water of fruits and flowers from the canyon."

He emptied the contents of the basin into an old clay mug that looked like a flowerpot. It was still very hot, so he blew on it to cool it. He took a sip and handed me the mug.

"Drink now!" he said.

I took it automatically, and without deliberation drank all the water. It tasted somewhat bitter, although the bitterness was hardly noticeable. What was very outstanding was the pungent odor of the water. It smelled like cockroaches.

Almost immediately I began to sweat. I got very warm, and blood

rushed to my ears. I saw a red spot in front of my eyes, and the muscles of my stomach began to contract in painful cramps. After a while, even though I felt no more pain, I began to get cold and perspiration literally soaked me.

Don Juan asked me if I saw blackness or black spots in front of my eyes. I told him I was seeing everything in red.

My teeth were chattering because of an uncontrollable nervousness that came to me in waves, as if radiating out from the middle of my chest.

Then he asked me if I was afraid. His questions seemed meaningless to me. I told him that I was obviously afraid, but he asked me again if I was afraid of her. I did not understand what he meant and I said yes. He laughed and said that I was not really afraid. He asked if I still saw red. All I was seeing was a huge red spot in front of my eyes.

I felt better after a while. Gradually the nervous spasms disappeared, leaving only an aching, pleasant tiredness and an intense desire to sleep. I couldn't keep my eyes open, although I could still hear don Juan's voice. I fell asleep. But the sensation of my being submerged in a deep red persisted all night. I even had dreams in red.

I woke up on Saturday about 3:00 P.M. I had slept almost two days. I had a mild headache and an upset stomach, and very sharp, intermittent pains in my intestines. Except for that, everything else was like an ordinary waking. I found don Juan sitting in front of his house dozing. He smiled at me.

"Everything went fine the other night," he said. "You saw red and that's all that is important."

"What would have happened if I had not seen red?"

"You would have seen black, and that is a bad sign."

"Why is it bad?"

"When a man sees black it means he is not made for the devil's weed, and he vomits his entrails out, all green and black."

"Would he die?"

"I don't think anyone would die, but he would be sick for a long time."

"What happens to those who see red?"

"They do not vomit, and the root gives them an effect of pleasure, which means they are strong and of violent nature—something that the weed likes. That is the way she entices. The only bad point is that men end up as slaves to the devil's weed in return for the power she gives them. But those are matters over which we have no control. Man lives only to learn. And if he learns it is because that is the nature of his lot, for good or bad."

"What shall I do next, don Juan?"

"Next you must plant a shoot [*brote*] that I have cut from the other half of the first portion of root. You took half of it the other night, and now the other half must be put into the ground. It has to grow and seed before you can undertake the real task of taming the plant."

"How will I tame her?"

"The devil's weed is tamed through the *root*. Step by step, you must learn the secrets of each portion of the root. You must intake them in order to learn the secrets and conquer the power."

"Are the different portions prepared in the same way you did the first one?"

"No, each portion is different."

"What are the specific effects of each portion?"

"I already said, each teaches a different form of power. What you took the other night is nothing yet. Anyone can do that. But only the brujo can take the deeper portions. I can't tell you what they do because I don't know yet whether she will take you. We must wait."

"When will you tell me, then?"

"Whenever your plant has grown and seeded."

"If the first portion can be taken by anyone, what is it used for?"

"In a diluted form it is good for all the matters of manhood, old people who have lost their vigor, or young men who are seeking adventures, or even women who want passion."

"You said the root is used for power only, but I see it's used for other matters besides power. Am I correct?"

He looked at me for a very long time, with a steadfast gaze that embarrassed me. I felt my question had made him angry, but I couldn't understand why.

"The weed is used only for power," he finally said in a dry, stern tone. "The man who wants his vigor back, the young people who seek to endure fatigue and hunger, the man who wants to kill another man, a woman who wants to be in heat—they all desire power. And the weed will give it to them! Do you feel you like her?" he asked after a pause.

"I feel a strange vigor," I said, and it was true. I had noticed it on awakening and I felt it then. It was a very peculiar sensation of discomfort, or frustration; my whole body moved and stretched with unusual lightness and strength. My arms and legs itched. My shoulders seemed to swell; the muscles of my back and neck made me feel like pushing, or rubbing, against trees. I felt I could demolish a wall by ramming it.

We did not speak anymore. We sat on the porch for a while. I noticed that don Juan was falling asleep; he nodded a couple of times, then he simply stretched his legs, lay on the floor with his hands behind his head, and went to sleep. I got up and went to the back of the house

where I burned up my extra physical energy by clearing away the debris; I remembered his mentioning that he would like me to help him clean up at the back of his house.

Later, when he woke up and came to the back, I was more relaxed.

We sat down to eat, and in the course of the meal he asked me three times how I felt. Since this was a rarity I finally asked, "Why do you worry about how I feel, don Juan? Do you expect me to have a bad reaction from drinking the juice?"

He laughed. I thought he was acting like a mischievous boy who has set up a prank and checks from time to time for the results. Still laughing, he said:

"You don't look sick. A while ago you even talked rough to me."

"I did not, don Juan," I protested. "I don't ever recall talking to you like that." I was very serious on that point because I did not remember that I had ever felt annoyed with him.

"You came out in her defense," he said.

"In whose defense?"

"You were defending the devil's weed. You sounded like a lover already."

I was going to protest even more vigorously about it, but I stopped myself.

"I really did not realize I was defending her."

"Of course you did not. You don't even remember what you said, do you?"

"No, I don't. I must admit it."

"You see. The devil's weed is like that. She sneaks up on you like a woman. You are not even aware of it. All you care about is that she makes you feel good and powerful: the muscles swelling with vigor, the fists itching, the soles of the feet burning to run somebody down. When a man knows her he really becomes full of cravings. My benefactor used to say that the devil's weed keeps men who want power, and gets rid of those who can't handle it. But power was more common then; it was sought more avidly. My benefactor was a powerful man, and according to what he told me, his benefactor, in turn, was even more given to the pursuit of power. But in those days there was good reason to be powerful.

"Do you think there is no reason for power nowadays?"

"Power is alright for you now. You are young. You are not an Indian. Perhaps the devil's weed would be good in your hands. You seem to have liked it. It made you feel strong. I felt all that myself. And yet I didn't like it."

"Can you tell me why, don Juan?"

"I don't like its power! There is no use for it anymore. In other times, like those my benefactor told me about, there was reason to seek power. Men performed phenomenal deeds, were admired for their strength and feared and respected for their knowledge. My benefactor told me stories of truly phenomenal deeds that were performed long, long ago. But now we, the Indians, do not seek that power anymore. Nowadays, the Indians use the weed to rub themselves. They use the leaves and flowers for other matters; they even say it cures their boils. But they do not seek its power, a power that acts like a magnet, more potent and more dangerous to handle as the root goes deeper into the ground. When one arrives to a depth of four yards—and they say some people have—one finds the seat of permanent power, power without end. Very few humans have done this in the past, and nobody has done it today. I'm telling you, the power of the devil's weed is no longer needed by us, the Indians. Little by little, I think we have lost interest, and now power does not matter anymore. I myself do not seek it, and yet at one time, when I was your age, I too felt its swelling inside me. I felt the way you did today, only five hundred times more strongly. I killed a man with a single blow of my arm. I could toss boulders, huge boulders not even twenty men could budge. Once I jumped so high I chopped the top leaves off the highest trees. But it was all for nothing! All I did was frighten the Indians—only the Indians. The rest who knew nothing about it did not believe it. They saw either a crazy Indian, or something moving at the top of the trees."

We were silent for a long time. I needed to say something.

"It was different when there were people in the world," he proceeded, "people who knew a man could become a mountain lion, or a bird, or that a man could simply fly. So I don't use the devil's weed anymore. For what? To frighten the Indians? [*¿Para que? ¿Para asustar a los indios?*]"

And I saw him sad, and a deep empathy filled me. I wanted to say something to him, even if it was a platitude.

"Perhaps, don Juan, that is the fate of all men who want to know."

"Perhaps," he said quietly.

Thursday, November 23, 1961

I didn't see don Juan sitting on his porch as I drove in. I thought it was strange. I called to him out loud and his daughter-in-law came out of the house.

"He's inside," she said.

I found he had dislocated his ankle several weeks before. He had made his own cast by soaking strips of cloth in a mush made with cactus

and powdered bone. The strips, wrapped tightly around his ankle, had dried into a light, streamlined cast. It had the hardness of plaster, but not its bulkiness.

"How did it happen?" I asked.

His daughter-in-law, a Mexican woman from Yucatan, who was tending him, answered me.

"It was an accident! He fell and nearly broke his foot!"

Don Juan laughed and waited until the woman had left the house before answering.

"Accident, my eye! I have an enemy nearby. A woman. 'La Catalina!' She pushed me during a moment of weakness and I fell."

"Why did she do that?"

"She wanted to kill me, that's why."

"Was she here with you?"

"Yes!"

"Why did you let her in?"

"I didn't. She flew in."

"I beg your pardon!"

"She is a blackbird [*chanate*]. And so effective at that. I was caught by surprise. She has been trying to finish me off for a long while. This time she got real close."

"Did you say she is a blackbird? I mean, is she a *bird?*"

"There you go again with your questions. She is a blackbird! The same way I'm a crow. Am I a man or a bird? I'm a man who knows how to become a bird. But going back to 'la Catalina,' she is a fiendish witch! Her intent to kill me is so strong that I can hardly fight her off. The blackbird came all the way into my house and I couldn't stop it."

"Can you become a bird, don Juan?"

"Yes! But that's something we'll take up later."

"Why does she want to kill you?"

"Oh, there's an old problem between us. It got out of hand and now it looks as if I will have to finish her off before she finishes me."

"Are you going to use witchcraft?" I asked with great expectations.

"Don't be silly. No witchcraft would ever work on her. I have other plans! I'll tell you about them someday."

"Can your ally protect you from her?"

"No! The little smoke only tells me what to do. Then I must protect myself."

"How about Mescalito? Can he protect you from her?"

"No! Mescalito is a teacher, not a power to be used for personal reasons."

"How about the devil's weed?"

"I've already said that I must protect myself, following the directions of my ally the smoke. And as far as I know, the smoke can do anything. If you want to know about any point in question, the smoke will tell you. And it will give you not only knowledge, but also the means to proceed. It's the most marvelous ally a man could have."

"Is the smoke the best possible ally for everybody?"

"It's not the same for everybody. Many fear it and won't touch it, or even get close to it. The smoke is like everything else; it wasn't made for all of us."

"What kind of smoke is it, don Juan?"

"The smoke of diviners!"

There was a noticeable reverence in his voice—a mood I had never detected before.

"I will begin by telling you exactly what my benefactor said to me when he began to teach me about it. Although at that time, like yourself now, I couldn't possibly have understood. 'The devil's weed is for those who bid for power. The smoke is for those who want to watch and see.' And in my opinion, the smoke is peerless. Once a man enters into its field, every other power is at his command. It's magnificent! Of course, it takes a lifetime. It takes years alone to become acquainted with its two vital parts: the pipe and the smoke mixture. The pipe was given to me by my benefactor, and after so many years of fondling it, it has become mine. It has grown into my hands. To turn it over to your hands, for instance, will be a real task for me, and a great accomplishment for you—if we succeed! The pipe will feel the strain of being handled by someone else; and if one of us makes a mistake there won't be any way to prevent the pipe from busting open by its own force, or escaping from our hands to shatter, even if it falls on a pile of straw. If that ever happens, it would mean the end of us both. Particularly of me. The smoke would turn against me in unbelievable ways."

"How could it turn against you if it's your ally?"

My question seemed to have altered his flow of thoughts. He didn't speak for a long time.

"The difficulty of the ingredients," he proceeded suddenly, "makes the smoke mixture one of the most dangerous substances I know. No one can prepare it without being coached. It is deadly poisonous to anyone except the smoke's protégé! Pipe and mixture ought to be treated with intimate care. And the man attempting to learn must prepare himself by leading a hard, quiet life. Its effects are so dreadful that only a very strong man can stand the smallest puff. Everything is terrifying and confusing at the outset, but every new puff makes things more precise. And suddenly the world opens up anew! Unimaginable! When this

happens the smoke has become one's ally and will resolve any question by allowing one to enter into inconceivable worlds.

"This is the smoke's greatest property, its greatest gift. And it performs its function without hurting in the least. I call the smoke a true ally!"

As usual, we were sitting in front of his house, where the dirt floor is always clean and packed hard; he suddenly got up and went inside the house. After a few moments he returned with a narrow bundle and sat down again.

"This is my pipe," he said.

He leaned over toward me and showed me a pipe he drew out of a sheath made of green canvas. It was perhaps nine or ten inches long. The stem was made of reddish wood; it was plain, without ornamentation. The bowl also seemed to be made of wood, but it was rather bulky in comparison with the thin stem. It had a sleek finish and was dark gray, almost charcoal.

He held the pipe in front of my face. I thought he was handing it over to me. I stretched out my hand to take it, but he quickly drew it back.

"This pipe was given to me by my benefactor," he said. "In turn I will pass it on to you. But first you must get to know it. Every time you come here I will give it to you. Begin by touching it. Hold it very briefly, at first, until you and the pipe get used to each other. Then put it in your pocket, or perhaps inside your shirt. And finally put it to your mouth. All this should be done little by little in a slow, careful way. When the bond has been established [*la amistad esta hecha*] you will smoke from it. If you follow my advice and don't rush, the smoke may become your preferred ally too."

He handed me the pipe, but without letting go of it. I stretched my right arm toward it.

"With both hands," he said.

I touched the pipe with both hands for a very brief moment. He did not extend it to me all the way so that I could grasp it, but only far enough for me to touch it. Then he pulled it back.

"The first step is to like the pipe. That takes time!"

"Can the pipe dislike me?"

"No. The pipe cannot dislike you, but you must learn to like it so that when the time of smoking comes for you, the pipe will help you to be unafraid."

"What do you smoke, don Juan?"

"This!"

He opened his collar and exposed to view a small bag he kept under

his shirt, which hung from his neck like a medallion. He brought it out, untied it, and very carefully poured some of its contents into the palm of his hand.

As far as I could tell, the mixture looked like finely shredded tea leaves, varying in color from dark brown to light green, with a few specks of bright yellow.

He returned the mixture to the bag, closed the bag, tied it with a leather string, and put it under his shirt again.

"What kind of mixture is it?"

"There are lots of things in it. To get all the ingredients is a very difficult undertaking. One must travel afar. The little mushrooms [*los honguitos*] needed to prepare the mixture grow only at certain times of the year, and only in certain places."

"Do you have a different mixture for each type of aid you need?"

"No! There is only one smoke, and there is no other like it."

He pointed to the bag hanging against his chest, and lifted the pipe which was resting between his legs.

"These two are one! One cannot go without the other. This pipe and the secret of this mixture belonged to my benefactor. They were handed down to him in the same way my benefactor gave them to me. The mixture, although difficult to prepare, is replenishable. Its secret lies in its ingredients, and in the way they are treated and mixed. The pipe, on the other hand, is a lifetime affair. It must be looked after with infinite care. It is hardy and strong, but it should never be struck or knocked about. It should be handled with dry hands, never when the hands are sweaty, and should be used only when one is alone. And no one, absolutely no one, should ever see it, unless you mean to give it to somebody. That is what my benefactor taught me, and that is the way I have dealt with the pipe all my life."

"What would happen if you should lose or break the pipe?"

He shook his head, very slowly, and looked at me.

"I would die!"

"Are all the sorcerers' pipes like yours?"

"Not all of them have pipes like mine. But I know some men who do."

"Can you yourself make a pipe like this one, don Juan?" I insisted. "Suppose you did not have it, how could you give me one if you wanted to do so?"

"If I didn't have the pipe, I could not, nor would I, want to give one. I would give you something else instead."

He seemed to be somehow cross at me. He placed his pipe very carefully inside the sheath, which must have been lined with a soft

material because the pipe, which fitted tightly, slid in very smoothly. He went inside the house to put his pipe away.

"Are you angry at me, don Juan?" I asked when he returned. He seemed surprised at my question.

"No! I'm never angry at anybody! No human being can do anything important enough for that. You get angry at people when you feel that their acts are important. I don't feel that way any longer."

Tuesday, December 26, 1961

The specific time to replant the "shoot," as don Juan called the root, was not set, although it was supposed to be the next step in taming the plant-power.

I arrived at don Juan's house on Saturday, December 23, early in the afternoon. We sat in silence for some time, as usual. The day was warm and cloudy. It had been months since he had given me the first portion.

"It is time to return the weed to the earth," he said suddenly. "But first I am going to fix a protection for you. You will keep it and guard it, and it is for you alone to see. Since I am going to fix it I will also see it. That is not good, because, as I told you, I am not fond of the devil's weed. We are not one. But my memory will not live long; I am too old. You must keep it from the eyes of others, however, for so long as their memory of having seen it lasts, the power of the protection is harmed."

He went into his room and pulled three burlap bundles out from under an old straw mat. He came back to the porch and sat down.

After a long silence he opened one bundle. It was the female *Datura* he had collected with me; all the leaves, flowers, and seedpods that he had stacked up before were dry. He took the long piece of root shaped like the letter Y and tied the bundle again.

The root had dried and shriveled and the bars of the fork had become more widely separated and more contorted. He put the root on his lap, opened his leather pouch, and pulled out his knife. He held the dry root in front of me.

"This part is for the head," he said, and made the first incision on the tail of the Y, which in an upside-down position resembled the shape of a man with his legs spread out.

"This is for the heart," he said, and cut close to the joint of the Y. Next he chopped the tips of the root, leaving about three inches of wood on each bar of the Y. Then, slowly and patiently he carved the shape of a man.

The root was dry and fibrous. In order to carve it, don Juan made two incisions and peeled the fibers between them to the depth of the cuts.

Nevertheless, when he came to details, he chiseled the wood, as when he shaped the arms and the hands. The final product was a wiry figurine of a man, arms folded over the chest and hands in a clasping position.

Don Juan got up and walked to a blue agave growing in front of the house, next to the porch. He took the hard thorn of one of the center, pulpy leaves, bent it, and rotated it three or four times. The circular motion almost detached it from the leaf; it hung loose. He bit on it, or rather, he held it between his teeth, and yanked it out. The thorn came out from the pulp, bringing with it a bunch of long threadlike fibers, attached to the woody part like a white tail, two feet long. Still holding the thorn between his teeth, don Juan twisted the fibers together between the palms of his hands and made a string, which he wrapped around the figurine's legs to bring them together. He encircled the lower part of the body until the string was all used up; then very skillfully he worked the thorn like an awl inside the front part of the body under the folded arms, until the sharp tip emerged as though popping out of the figurine's hands. He used his teeth again and, by pulling gently, brought the thorn nearly all the way out. It looked like a long spear protruding from the figure's chest. Without looking at the figure anymore, don Juan placed it inside his leather pouch. He seemed exhausted from the effort. He lay down on the floor and fell asleep.

It was already dark when he woke up. We ate the groceries I had brought him and sat on the porch for a while longer. Then don Juan walked to the back of the house, carrying the three burlap bundles. He cut twigs and dry branches and started a fire. We sat in front of it comfortably, and he opened all three bundles. Besides the one containing the dry pieces of the female plant, there was another with all that was left of the male plant, and a third, bulky one containing green, freshly cut pieces of *Datura.*

Don Juan went to the pig's trough and came back with a stone mortar, a very deep one that looked more like a pot whose bottom ended in a soft curve. He made a shallow hole and set the mortar firmly on the ground. He put more dry twigs on the fire, then took the two bundles with the dry pieces of male and female plants and emptied them into the mortar all at once. He shook the burlap to make sure that all the debris had fallen into the mortar. From the third bundle he extracted two fresh pieces of *Datura* root.

"I am going to prepare them just for you," he said.

"What kind of a preparation is it, don Juan?"

"One of these pieces comes from a male plant, the other from a female plant. This is the only time the two plants should be put together. The pieces come from a depth of one yard."

He mashed them inside the mortar with even strokes of the pestle. As he did so, he chanted in a low voice, which sounded like a rhythmless, monotonous hum. The words were unintelligible to me. He was absorbed in his task.

When the roots were completely mashed he took some *Datura* leaves from the bundle. They were clean and freshly cut, and all were intact and free of wormholes and cuts. He dropped them into the mortar one at a time. He took a handful of *Datura* flowers and dropped them also into the mortar in the same deliberate manner. I counted fourteen of each. Then he got a bunch of fresh, green seedpods which had all their spikes and were not open. I could not count them because he dropped them into the mortar all at once, but I assumed that there were also fourteen of them. He added three stems of *Datura* without any leaves. They were dark red and clean and seemed to have belonged to large plants, judging by their multiple ramifications.

After all these items had been put into the mortar, he mashed them to a pulp with the same even strokes. At a certain moment he tipped the mortar over, and with his hand scooped the mixture into an old pot. He stretched out his hand to me, and I thought he wanted me to dry it. Instead, he took my left hand and with a very fast motion separated the middle and fourth fingers as far as he could. Then, with the point of his knife, he stabbed me right in between the two fingers and ripped downward on the skin of the fourth finger. He acted with so much skill and speed that when I jerked my hand away it was deeply cut, and the blood was flowing abundantly. He grabbed my hand again, placed it over the pot, and squeezed it to force more blood out.

My arm got numb. I was in a state of shock—strangely cold and rigid, with an oppressive sensation in my chest and ears. I felt I was sliding down on my seat. I was fainting! He let go my hand and stirred the contents of the pot. When I recovered from the shock I was really angry with him. It took me quite some time to regain my composure.

He set up three stones around the fire and placed the pot on top of them. To all the ingredients he added something that I took to be a big chunk of carpenter's glue and a pot of water, and let all that boil. *Datura* plants have, by themselves, a very peculiar odor. Combined with the carpenter's glue, which gave off a strong odor when the mixture began to boil, they created so pungent a vapor that I had to fight not to vomit.

The mix boiled for a long time as we sat there motionless in front of it. At times, when the wind blew the vapor in my direction, the stench enveloped me, and I held my breath in an effort to avoid it.

Don Juan opened his leather pouch and took the figurine out; he handed it to me carefully and told me to place it inside the pot without

burning my hands. I let it slip gently into the boiling mush. He got out his knife, and for a second I thought he was going to slash me again; instead, he pushed the figurine with the tip of the knife and sank it.

He watched the mush boil for a while longer, and then began to clean the mortar. I helped him. When we had finished he set the mortar and pestle against the fence. We went inside the house, and the pot was left on the stones all night.

The next morning at dawn don Juan instructed me to pull the figurine out of the glue and hang it from the roof facing the east, to dry in the sun. At noon it was stiff as a wire. The heat had sealed the glue, and the green color of the leaves had mixed with it. The figurine had a glossy, eerie finish.

Don Juan asked me to get the figurine down. Then he handed me a leather pouch he had made out of an old suede jacket I had brought for him some time before. The pouch looked like the one he owned himself. The only difference was that his was made of soft, brown leather.

"Put your 'image' inside the pouch and close it," he said.

He did not look at me, and deliberately kept his head turned away. Once I had the figurine inside the pouch he gave me a carrying net, and told me to put the clay pot inside the net.

He walked to my car, took the net from my hands, and fastened it onto the open lid of the glove compartment.

"Come with me," he said.

I followed him. He walked around the house, making a complete clockwise circle. He stopped at the porch and circled the house again, this time going counterclockwise and again returning to the porch. He stood motionless for some time, and then sat down.

I was conditioned to believe that everything he did had some meaning. I was wondering about the significance of circling the house when he said, "Hey! I have forgotten where I put it."

I asked him what he was looking for. He said he had forgotten where he had placed the shoot I was to replant. We walked around the house once more before he remembered where it was.

He showed me a small glass jar on a piece of board nailed to the wall below the roof. The jar contained the other half of the first portion of the *Datura* root. The shoot had an incipient growth of leaves at its top end. The jar contained a small amount of water, but no soil.

"Why doesn't it have any soil?" I asked.

"All soils are not the same, and the devil's weed must know only the soil on which she will live and grow. And now it is time to return her to the ground before the worms damage her."

"Can we plant her here near the house?" I asked.

"No! No! Not around here. She must be returned to a place of your liking."

"But where can I find a place of my liking?"

"I don't know that. You can replant her wherever you want. But she must be cared for and looked after, because she must live so that you will have the power you need. If she dies, it means that she does not want you, and you must not disturb her further. It means you won't have power over her. Therefore, you must care for her, and look after her, so that she will grow. You must not pamper her, though."

"Why not?"

"Because if it is not her will to grow, it is of no use to entice her. But, on the other hand, you must prove that you care. Keep the worms away and give her water when you visit her. This must be done regularly until she seeds. After the first seeds bud out, we will be sure that she wants you."

"But, don Juan, it is not possible for me to look after the root the way you wish."

"If you want her power, you must do it! There is no other way!"

"Can you take care of her for me when I am not here, don Juan?"

"No! Not I! I can't do that! Each one must nourish his own shoot. I had my own. Now you must have yours. And not until she has seeded, as I told you, can you consider yourself ready for learning."

"Where do you think I should replant her?"

"That is for you alone to decide! And nobody must know the place, not even I! That is the way the replanting must be done. Nobody, but nobody, can know where your plant is. If a stranger follows you, or sees you, take the shoot and run away to another place. He could cause you unimaginable harm through manipulating the shoot. He could cripple or kill you. That's why not even I must know where your plant is."

He handed me the little jar with the shoot.

"Take it now."

I took it. Then he almost dragged me to my car.

"Now you must leave. Go and pick the spot where you will replant the shoot. Dig a deep hole, in soft dirt, next to a watery place. Remember, she must be near water in order to grow. Dig the hole with your hands only, even if they bleed. Place the shoot in the center of the hole and make a mound [*pilón*] around it. Then soak it with water. When the water sinks, fill the hole with soft dirt. Next, pick a spot two paces away from the shoot, in that direction [pointing to the southeast]. Dig another deep hole there, also with your hands, and dump into it what is in the pot. Then smash the pot and bury it deep in another place, far from the spot where your shoot is. When you have buried the pot go back to

your shoot and water it once more. Then take out your image, hold it between the fingers where the flesh wound is, and, standing on the spot where you have buried the glue, touch the shoot lightly with the sharp needle. Circle the shoot four times, stopping each time in the same spot to touch it."

"Do I have to follow a specific direction when I go around the root?"

"Any direction will do. But you must *always remember* in what direction you buried the glue, and what direction you took when you circled the shoot. Touch the shoot lightly with the point every time except the last, when you must thrust it deep. But do it carefully; kneel for a more steady hand because you must not break the point inside the shoot. If you break it, you are finished. The root will be of no use to you."

"Do I have to say any words while I go around the shoot?"

"No, I will do that for you."

Saturday, January 27, 1962

As soon as I got to his house this morning don Juan told me he was going to show me how to prepare the smoke mixture. We walked to the hills and went quite a way into one of the canyons. He stopped next to a tall, slender bush whose color contrasted markedly with that of the surrounding vegetation. The chaparral around the bush was yellowish, but the bush was bright green.

"From this little tree you must take the leaves and the flowers," he said. "The right time to pick them is All Souls' Day [*el día de las ánimas*]."

He took out his knife and chopped off the end of a thin branch. He chose another similar branch and also chopped off its tip. He repeated this operation until he had a handful of branch tips. Then he sat down on the ground.

"Look here," he said. "I have cut all the branches above the fork made by two or more leaves and the stem. Do you see? They are all the same. I have used only the tip of each branch, where the leaves are fresh and tender. Now we must look for a shaded place."

We walked until he seemed to have found what he was looking for. He took a long string from his pocket and tied it to the trunk and the lower branches of two bushes, making a kind of clothesline on which he hung the branch tips upside down. He arranged them along the string in a neat fashion; hooked by the fork between the leaves and the stem, they resembled a long row of green horsemen.

"One must see that the leaves dry in the shade," he said. "The place

must be secluded and difficult to get to. That way the leaves are protected. They must be left to dry in a place where it would be almost impossible to find them. After they have dried, they must be put in a bundle and sealed."

He picked up the leaves from the string and threw them into the nearby shrubs. Apparently he had intended only to show me the procedure.

We continued walking and he picked three different flowers, saying they were part of the ingredients and were supposed to be gathered at the same time. But the flowers had to be put in separate clay pots and dried in darkness; a lid had to be placed on each pot so the flowers would turn moldy inside the container. He said the function of the leaves and the flowers was to sweeten the smoke mixture.

We came out of the canyon and walked toward the riverbed. After a long detour we returned to his house. Late in the evening we sat in his own room, a thing he rarely allowed me to do, and he told me about the final ingredient of the mixture, the mushrooms.

"The real secret of the mixture lies in the mushrooms," he said. "They are the most difficult ingredient to collect. The trip to the place where they grow is long and dangerous, and to select the right variety is even more perilous. There are other kinds of mushrooms growing alongside which are of no use; they would spoil the good ones if they were dried together. It takes time to know the mushrooms well in order not to make a mistake. Serious harm will result from using the wrong kind—harm to the man and to the pipe. I know of men who have dropped dead from using the foul smoke.

"As soon as the mushrooms are picked they are put inside a gourd, so there is no way to recheck them. You see, they have to be torn to shreds in order to make them go through the narrow neck of the gourd."

"How can one prevent a mistake?"

"By being careful and knowing how to choose. I told you it is difficult. Not everybody can tame the smoke; most people do not even make the attempt."

"How long do you keep the mushrooms inside the gourd?"

"For a year. All the other ingredients are also sealed for a year. Then equal parts of them are measured and ground separately into a very fine powder. The little mushrooms don't have to be ground because they become a very fine dust by themselves; all one needs to do is to mash the chunks. Four parts of mushrooms are added to one part of all the other ingredients together. Then they are all mixed and put into a bag like mine." He pointed to the little sack hanging under his shirt.

"Then all the ingredients are gathered again, and after they have

been put to dry you are ready to smoke the mixture you have just prepared. In your own case, you will smoke next year. And the year after that, the mixture will be all yours because you will have gathered it by yourself. The first time you smoke I will light the pipe for you. You will smoke all the mixture in the bowl and wait. The smoke will come. You will feel it. It will set you free to see anything you want to see. Properly speaking, it is a matchless ally. But whoever seeks it must have an intent and a will beyond reproach. He needs them because he has to intend and will his return, or the smoke will not let him come back. Second, he must intend and will to remember whatever the smoke allowed him to see, otherwise it will be nothing more than a piece of fog in his mind."

Saturday, April 8, 1962

In our conversations, don Juan consistently used or referred to the phrase "man of knowledge," but never explained what he meant by it. I asked him about it.

"A man of knowledge is one who has followed truthfully the hardships of learning," he said. "A man who has, without rushing or without faltering, gone as far as he can in unraveling the secrets of power and knowledge."

"Can anyone be a man of knowledge?"

"No, not anyone."

"Then what must a man do to become a man of knowledge?"

"He must challenge and defeat his four natural enemies."

"Will he be a man of knowledge after defeating these four enemies?"

"Yes. A man can call himself a man of knowledge only if he is capable of defeating all four of them."

"Then, can *anybody* who defeats these enemies be a man of knowledge?"

"Anybody who defeats them becomes a man of knowledge."

"But are there any special requirements a man must fulfill before fighting with these enemies?"

"No. Anyone can try to become a man of knowledge; very few men actually succeed, but that is only natural. The enemies a man encounters on the path of learning to become a man of knowledge are truly formidable; most men succumb to them."

"What kind of enemies are they, don Juan?"

He refused to talk about the enemies. He said it would be a long time before the subject would make any sense to me. I tried to keep the

topic alive and asked him if he thought *I* could become a man of knowledge. He said no man could possibly tell that for sure. But I insisted on knowing if there were any clues he could use to determine whether or not I had a chance of becoming a man of knowledge. He said it would depend on my battle against the four enemies—whether I could defeat them or would be defeated by them—but it was impossible to foretell the outcome of that fight.

I asked him if he could use witchcraft or divination to see the outcome of the battle. He flatly stated that the results of the struggle could not be foreseen by any means, because becoming a man of knowledge was a temporary thing. When I asked him to explain this point, he replied:

"To be a man of knowledge has no permanence. One is never a man of knowledge, not really. Rather, one becomes a man of knowledge for a very brief instant, after defeating the four natural enemies."

"You must tell me, don Juan, what kind of enemies they are."

He did not answer. I insisted again, but he dropped the subject and started to talk about something else.

Sunday, April 15, 1962

As I was getting ready to leave, I decided to ask him once more about the enemies of a man of knowledge. I argued that I could not return for some time, and it would be a good idea to write down what he had to say and then think about it while I was away.

He hesitated for a while, but then began to talk.

"When a man starts to learn, he is never clear about his objectives. His purpose is faulty; his intent is vague. He hopes for rewards that will never materialize, for he knows nothing of the hardships of learning.

"He slowly begins to learn—bit by bit at first, then in big chunks. And his thoughts soon clash. What he learns is never what he pictured, or imagined, and so he begins to be afraid. Learning is never what one expects. Every step of learning is a new task, and the fear the man is experiencing begins to mount mercilessly, unyieldingly. His purpose becomes a battlefield.

"And thus he has stumbled upon the first of his natural enemies: Fear! A terrible enemy—treacherous, and difficult to overcome. It remains concealed at every turn of the way, prowling, waiting. And if the man, terrified in its presence, runs away, his enemy will have put an end to his quest."

"What will happen to the man if he runs away in fear?"

"Nothing happens to him except that he will never learn. He will

never become a man of knowledge. He will perhaps be a bully, or a harmless, scared man; at any rate, he will be a defeated man. His first enemy will have put an end to his cravings."

"And what can he do to overcome fear?"

"The answer is very simple. He must not run away. He must defy his fear, and in spite of it he must take the next step in learning, and the next, and the next. He must be fully afraid, and yet he must not stop. That is the rule! And a moment will come when his first enemy retreats. The man begins to feel sure of himself. His intent becomes stronger. Learning is no longer a terrifying task.

"When this joyful moment comes, the man can say without hesitation that he has defeated his first natural enemy."

"Does it happen at once, don Juan, or little by little?"

"It happens little by little, and yet the fear is vanquished suddenly and fast."

"But won't the man be afraid again if something new happens to him?"

"No. Once a man has vanquished fear, he is free from it for the rest of his life because, instead of fear, he has acquired clarity—a clarity of mind which erases fear. By then a man knows his desires; he knows how to satisfy those desires. He can anticipate the new steps of learning, and a sharp clarity surrounds everything. The man feels that nothing is concealed.

"And thus he has encountered his second enemy: Clarity! That clarity of mind, which is so hard to obtain, dispels fear, but also blinds.

"It forces the man never to doubt himself. It gives him the assurance he can do anything he pleases, for he sees clearly into everything. And he is courageous because he is clear, and he stops at nothing because he is clear. But all that is a mistake; it is like something incomplete. If the man yields to this make-believe power, he has succumbed to his second enemy and will fumble with learning. He will rush when he should be patient, or he will be patient when he should rush. And he will fumble with learning until he winds up incapable of learning anything more."

"What becomes of a man who is defeated in that way, don Juan? Does he die as a result?"

"No, he doesn't die. His second enemy has just stopped him cold from trying to become a man of knowledge; instead, the man may turn into a buoyant warrior, or a clown. Yet the clarity for which he has paid so dearly will never change to darkness and fear again. He will be clear as long as he lives, but he will no longer learn, or yearn for, anything."

"But what does he have to do to avoid being defeated?"

"He must do what he did with fear: he must defy his clarity and use it only to see, and wait patiently and measure carefully before taking new steps; he must think, above all, that his clarity is almost a mistake. And a moment will come when he will understand that his clarity was only a point before his eyes. And thus he will have overcome his second enemy, and will arrive at a position where nothing can harm him anymore. This will not be a mistake. It will not be only a point before his eyes. It will be true power.

"He will know at this point that the power he has been pursuing for so long is finally his. He can do with it whatever he pleases. His ally is at his command. His wish is the rule. He sees all that is around him. But he has also come across his third enemy: Power!

"Power is the strongest of all enemies. And naturally the easiest thing to do is to give in; after all, the man is truly invincible. He commands; he begins by taking calculated risks, and ends in making rules, because he is a master.

"A man at this stage hardly notices his third enemy closing in on him. And suddenly, without knowing, he will certainly have lost the battle. His enemy will have turned him into a cruel, capricious man."

"Will he lose his power?"

"No, he will never lose his clarity or his power."

"What then will distinguish him from a man of knowledge?"

"A man who is defeated by power dies without really knowing how to handle it. Power is only a burden upon his fate. Such a man has no command over himself, and cannot tell when or how to use his power."

"Is the defeat by any of these enemies a final defeat?"

"Of course it is final. Once one of these enemies overpowers a man there is nothing he can do."

"Is it possible, for instance, that the man who is defeated by power may see his error and mend his ways?"

"No. Once a man gives in he is through."

"But what if he is temporarily blinded by power, and then refuses it?"

"That means his battle is still on. That means he is still trying to become a man of knowledge. A man is defeated only when he no longer tries, and abandons himself."

"But then, don Juan, it is possible that a man may abandon himself to fear for years, but finally conquer it."

"No, that is not true. If he gives in to fear he will never conquer it, because he will shy away from learning and never try again. But if he tries to learn for years in the midst of his fear, he will eventually conquer it because he will never have really abandoned himself to it."

"How can he defeat his third enemy, don Juan?"

"He has to defy it, deliberately. He has to come to realize the power he has seemingly conquered is in reality never his. He must keep himself in line at all times, handling carefully and faithfully all that he has learned. If he can see that clarity and power, without his control over himself, are worse than mistakes, he will reach a point where everything is held in check. He will know then when and how to use his power. And thus he will have defeated his third enemy.

"The man will be, by then, at the end of his journey of learning, and almost without warning he will come upon the last of his enemies: Old age! This enemy is the cruelest of all, the one he won't be able to defeat completely, but only fight away.

"This is the time when a man has no more fears, no more impatient clarity of mind—a time when all his power is in check, but also the time when he has an unyielding desire to rest. If he gives in totally to his desire to lie down and forget, if he soothes himself in tiredness, he will have lost his last round, and his enemy will cut him down into a feeble old creature. His desire to retreat will overrule all his clarity, his power, and his knowledge.

"But if the man sloughs off his tiredness, and lives his fate through, he can then be called a man of knowledge, if only for the brief moment when he succeeds in fighting off his last, invincible enemy. That moment of clarity, power, and knowledge is enough."

4

Don Juan seldom spoke openly about Mescalito. Every time I questioned him on the subject he refused to talk, but he always said enough to create an impression of Mescalito, an impression that was always anthropomorphic. Mescalito was a male, not only because of the mandatory grammatical rule that gives the word a masculine gender, but also because of his constant qualities of being a protector and a teacher. Don Juan reaffirmed these characteristics in various forms every time we talked.

Sunday, December 24, 1961

"The devil's weed has never protected anyone. She serves only to give power. Mescalito, on the other hand, is gentle, like a baby."

"But you said Mescalito is terrifying at times."

"Of course he is terrifying, but once you get to know him, he is gentle and kind."

"How does he show his kindness?"

"He is a protector and a teacher."

"How does he protect?"

"You can keep him with you at all times and he will see that nothing bad happens to you."

"How can you keep him with you at all times?"

"In a little bag, fastened under your arm or around your neck with a string."

"Do you have him with you?"

"No, because I have an ally. But other people do."

"What does he teach?"

"He teaches you to live properly."

"How does he teach?"

"He shows things and tells what is what [*enzeña las cosas y te dice lo que son*]."

"How?"

"You will have to see for yourself."

Tuesday, January 30, 1962

"What do you see when Mescalito takes you with him, don Juan?"

"Such things are not for ordinary conversation. I can't tell you that."

"Would something bad happen to you if you told?"

"Mescalito is a protector, a kind, gentle protector; but that does not mean you can make fun of him. Because he is a kind protector he can also be horror itself with those he does not like."

"I do not intend to make fun of him. I just want to know what he makes other people do or see. I described to you all that Mescalito made me see, don Juan."

"With you it is different, perhaps because you don't know his ways. You have to be taught his ways as a child is taught how to walk."

"How long do I still have to be taught?"

"Until he himself begins to make sense to you."

"And then?"

"Then you will understand by yourself. You won't have to tell me anything anymore."

"Can you just tell me where Mescalito takes you?"

"I can't talk about it."

"All I want to know is if there is another world to which he takes people."

"There is."

"Is it heaven?" (The Spanish word for heaven is *cielo,* but that also means "sky.")

"He takes you through the sky [*cielo*]."

"I mean, is it heaven [*cielo*] where God is?"

"You are being stupid now. I don't know where God is."

"Is Mescalito God—the only God? Or is he one of the gods?"

"He is just a protector and a teacher. He is a power."

"Is he a power within ourselves?"

"No. Mescalito has nothing to do with ourselves. He is outside us."

"Then everyone who takes Mescalito must see him in the same form."

"No, not at all. He is not the same for everybody."

Thursday, April 12, 1962

"Why don't you tell me more about Mescalito, don Juan?"

"There is nothing to tell."

"There must be thousands of things I should know before I encounter him again."

"No. Perhaps for you there is nothing you have to know. As I have already told you, he is not the same for everyone."

"I know, but still I'd like to know how others feel about him."

"The opinion of those who care to talk about him is not worth much. You will see. You will probably talk about him up to a certain point, and from then on you will never discuss him."

"Can you tell me about your own first experiences?"

"What for?"

"Then I'll know how to behave with Mescalito."

"You already know more than I do. You actually played with him. Someday you will see how kind the protector was with you. That first time I am sure he told you many, many things, but you were deaf and blind."

Saturday, April 14, 1962

"Does Mescalito take *any* form when he shows himself?"

"Yes, any form."

"Then, which are the most common forms you know?"

"There are no common forms."

"Do you mean, don Juan, that he appears in any form, even to men who know him well?"

"No. He appears in any form to those who know him only a little, but to those who know him well, he is always constant."

"How is he constant?"

"He appears to them sometimes as a man, like us, or as a light. Just a light."

"Does Mescalito ever change his permanent form with those who know him well?"

"Not to my knowledge."

Friday, July 6, 1962

Don Juan and I started on a trip late in the afternoon of Saturday, June 23. He said we were going to look for *honguitos* (mushrooms) in the state of Chihuahua. He said it was going to be a long, hard trip. He was right. We arrived in a little mining town in northern Chihuahua at 10:00 P.M. on Wednesday, June 27. We walked from the place I had parked the car at the outskirts of town, to the house of his friends, a Tarahumara Indian and his wife. We slept there.

The next morning the man woke us up around five. He brought us gruel and beans. He sat and talked to don Juan while we ate, but he said nothing concerning our trip.

After breakfast the man put water into my canteen, and two sweet-

rolls into my knapsack. Don Juan handed me the canteen, fixed the knapsack with a cord over his shoulders, thanked the man for his courtesies, and, turning to me, said, "It is time to go."

We walked on the dirt road for about a mile. From there we cut through the fields and in two hours we were at the foot of the hills south of town. We climbed the gentle slopes in a southwesterly direction. When we reached the steeper inclines, don Juan changed directions and we followed a high valley to the east. Despite his advanced age, don Juan kept up a pace so incredibly fast that by midday I was completely exhausted. We sat down and he opened the bread sack.

"You can eat all of it, if you want," he said.

"How about you?"

"I am not hungry, and we won't need this food later on."

I was very tired and hungry and took him up on his offer. I felt this was a good time to talk about the purpose of our trip, and quite casually I asked, "Do you think we are going to stay here for a long time?"

"We are here to gather some Mescalito. We will stay until tomorrow."

"Where is Mescalito?"

"All around us."

Cacti of many species were growing in profusion all through the area, but I could not distinguish peyote among them.

We started to hike again and by three o'clock we came to a long, narrow valley with steep side hills. I felt strangely excited at the idea of finding peyote, which I had never seen in its natural environment. We entered the valley and must have walked about four hundred feet when suddenly I spotted three unmistakable peyote plants. They were in a cluster a few inches above the ground in front of me, to the left of the path. They looked like round, pulpy, green roses. I ran toward them, pointing them out to don Juan.

He ignored me and deliberately kept his back turned as he walked away. I knew I had done the wrong thing, and for the rest of the afternoon we walked in silence, moving slowly on the flat valley floor, which was covered with small, sharp-edged rocks. We moved among the cacti, disturbing crowds of lizards and at times a solitary bird. And I passed scores of peyote plants without saying a word.

At six o'clock we were at the bottom of the mountains that marked the end of the valley. We climbed to a ledge. Don Juan dropped his sack and sat down.

I was hungry again, but we had no food left; I suggested that we pick up the Mescalito and head back for town. He looked annoyed and

made a smacking sound with his lips. He said we were going to spend the night there.

We sat quietly. There was a rock wall to the left, and to the right was the valley we had just crossed. It extended for quite a distance and seemed to be wider than, and not so flat as, I had thought. Viewed from the spot where I sat, it was full of small hills and protuberances.

"Tomorrow we will start walking back," don Juan said without looking at me, and pointing to the valley. "We will work our way back and pick him as we cross the field. That is, we will pick him only when he is in our way. *He* will find us and not the other way around. *He* will find us—if he wants to."

Don Juan rested his back against the rock wall and, with his head turned to his side, continued talking as though another person were there besides myself. "One more thing. Only *I* can pick him. You will perhaps carry the bag, or walk ahead of me—I don't know yet. But tomorrow you will not point at him as you did today!"

"I am sorry, don Juan."

"It is alright. You didn't know."

"Did your benefactor teach you all this about Mescalito?"

"No! Nobody has taught me about him. It was the protector himself who was my teacher."

"Then Mescalito is like a person to whom you can talk?"

"No, he isn't."

"How does he teach, then?"

He remained silent for a while.

"Remember the time when you played with him? You understood what he meant, didn't you?"

"I did!"

"That is the way he teaches. You did not know it then, but if you had paid attention to him, he would have talked to you."

"When?"

"When you saw him for the first time."

He seemed to be very annoyed by my questioning. I told him I had to ask all these questions because I wanted to find out all I could.

"Don't ask *me!*" He smiled maliciously. "Ask *him.* The next time you see him, ask him everything you want to know."

"Then Mescalito *is* like a person you can talk . . ."

He did not let me finish. He turned away, picked up the canteen, stepped down from the ledge, and disappeared around the rock. I did not want to be alone there, and even though he had not asked me to go along, I followed him. We walked for about five hundred feet to a small

creek. He washed his hands and face and filled up the canteen. He swished water around in his mouth, but did not drink it. I scooped up some water in my hands and drank, but he stopped me and said it was unnecessary to drink.

He handed me the canteen and started to walk back to the ledge. When we got there we sat again facing the valley with our backs to the rock wall. I asked if we could build a fire. He reacted as if it was inconceivable to ask such a thing. He said that for that night we were Mescalito's guests and he was going to keep us warm.

It was already dusk. Don Juan pulled two thin, cotton blankets from his sack, threw one into my lap, and sat cross-legged with the other one over his shoulders. Below us the valley was dark, with its edges already diffused in the evening mist.

Don Juan sat motionless facing the peyote field. A steady wind blew on my face.

"The twilight is the crack between the worlds," he said softly, without turning to me.

I didn't ask what he meant. My eyes became tired. Suddenly I felt elated; I had a strange, overpowering desire to weep!

I lay on my stomach; the rock floor was hard and uncomfortable, and I had to change my position every few minutes. Finally I sat up and crossed my legs, putting the blanket over my shoulders. To my amazement this position was supremely comfortable, and I fell asleep.

When I woke up, I heard don Juan talking to me. It was very dark. I could not see him well. I did not understand what he said, but I followed him when he started to go down from the ledge. We moved carefully, or at least I did, because of the darkness. We stopped at the bottom of the rock wall. Don Juan sat down and signaled me to sit at his left. He opened up his shirt and took out a leather sack, which he opened and placed on the ground in front of him. It contained a number of dried peyote buttons.

After a long pause he picked up one of the buttons. He held it in his right hand, rubbing it several times between the thumb and the first finger as he chanted softly. Suddenly he let out a tremendous cry.

"Ahiiii!"

It was weird, unexpected. It terrified me. Vaguely I saw him place the peyote button in his mouth and begin to chew it. After a moment he picked up the whole sack, leaned toward me, and told me in a whisper to take the sack, pick out one mescalito, put the sack in front of us again, and then do exactly as he did.

I picked a peyote button and rubbed it as he had done. Meanwhile he chanted, swaying back and forth. I tried to put the button into my

mouth several times, but I felt embarrassed to cry out. Then, as in a dream, an unbelievable shriek came out of me: Ahiiii! For a moment I thought it was someone else. Again I felt the effects of nervous shock in my stomach. I was falling backward. I was fainting. I put the peyote button into my mouth and chewed it. After a while don Juan picked up another from the sack. I was relieved to see that he put it into his mouth after a short chant. He passed the sack to me, and I placed it in front of us again after taking one button. This cycle went on five times before I noticed any thirst. I picked up the canteen to drink, but don Juan told me just to wash my mouth, and not to drink or I would vomit.

I swished the water around in my mouth repeatedly. At a certain moment drinking was a formidable temptation, and I swallowed a bit of water. Immediately my stomach began to convulse. I expected to have a painless and effortless flowing of liquid from my mouth, as had happened during my first experience with peyote, but to my surprise I had only the ordinary sensation of vomiting. It did not last long, however.

Don Juan picked up another button and handed me the sack, and the cycle was renewed and repeated until I had chewed fourteen buttons. By this time all my early sensations of thirst, cold, and discomfort had disappeared. In their place I felt an unfamiliar sense of warmth and excitation. I took the canteen to freshen my mouth, but it was empty.

"Can we go to the creek, don Juan?"

The sound of my voice did not project out, but hit the roof of my palate, bounced back into my throat, and echoed to and fro between them. The echo was soft and musical, and seemed to have wings that flapped inside my throat. Its touch soothed me. I followed its back-and-forth movements until it had vanished.

I repeated the question. My voice sounded as though I was talking inside a vault.

Don Juan did not answer. I got up and turned in the direction of the creek. I looked at him to see if he was coming, but he seemed to be listening attentively to something.

He made an imperative sign with his hand to be quiet.

"Abuhtol[?] is already here!" he said.

I had never heard that word before, and I was wondering whether to ask him about it when I detected a noise that seemed to be a buzzing inside my ears. The sound became louder by degrees until it was like the vibration caused by an enormous bull-roarer. It lasted for a brief moment and subsided gradually until everything was quiet again. The violence and the intensity of the noise terrified me. I was shaking so much that I could hardly remain standing, yet I was perfectly rational. If I had been drowsy a few minutes before, this feeling had totally van-

ished, giving way to a state of extreme lucidity. The noise reminded me of a science fiction movie in which a gigantic bee buzzed its wings coming out of an atomic radiation area. I laughed at the thought. I saw don Juan slumping back into his relaxed position. And suddenly the image of a gigantic bee accosted me again. It was more real than ordinary thoughts. It stood alone surrounded by an extraordinary clarity. Everything else was driven from my mind. This state of mental clearness, which had no precedents in my life, produced another moment of terror.

I began to perspire. I leaned toward don Juan to tell him I was afraid. His face was a few inches from mine. He was looking at me, but his eyes were the eyes of a bee. They looked like round glasses that had a light of their own in the darkness. His lips were pushed out, and from them came a pattering noise: "Pehtuh-peh-tuh-pet-tuh." I jumped backward, nearly crashing into the rock wall. For a seemingly endless time I experienced an unbearable fear. I was panting and whining. The perspiration had frozen on my skin, giving me an awkward rigidity. Then I heard don Juan's voice saying, "Get up! Move around! Get up!"

The image vanished and again I could see his familiar face.

"I'll get some water," I said after another endless moment. My voice cracked. I could hardly articulate the words. Don Juan nodded yes. As I walked away I realized that my fear had gone as fast and as mysteriously as it had come.

Upon approaching the creek I noticed that I could see every object in the way. I remembered I had just seen don Juan clearly, whereas earlier I could hardly distinguish the outlines of his figure. I stopped and looked into the distance, and I could even see across the valley. Some boulders on the other side became perfectly visible. I thought it must be early morning, but it occurred to me that I might have lost track of time. I looked at my watch. It was ten of twelve! I checked the watch to see if it was working. It couldn't be midday; it had to be midnight! I intended to make a dash for the water and come back to the rocks, but I saw don Juan coming down and I waited for him. I told him I could see in the dark.

He stared at me for a long time without saying a word; if he did speak, perhaps I did not hear him, for I was concentrating on my new, unique ability to see in the dark. I could distinguish the very minute pebbles in the sand. At moments everything was so clear it seemed to be early morning, or dusk. Then it would get dark; then it would clear again. Soon I realized that the brightness corresponded to my heart's diastole, and the darkness to its systole. The world changed from bright to dark to bright again with every beat of my heart.

I was absorbed in this discovery when the same strange sound that I had heard before became audible again. My muscles stiffened.

"Anuhctal [as I heard the word this time] is here," don Juan said. I fancied the roar so thunderous, so overwhelming, that nothing else mattered. When it had subsided, I perceived a sudden increase in the volume of water. The creek, which a minute before had been less than a foot wide, expanded until it was an enormous lake. Light that seemed to come from above it touched the surface as though shining through thick foliage. From time to time the water would glitter for a second—gold and black. Then it would remain dark, lightless, almost out of sight, and yet strangely present.

I don't recall how long I stayed there just watching, squatting on the shore of the black lake. The roar must have subsided in the meantime, because what jolted me back (to reality?) was again a terrifying buzzing. I turned around to look for don Juan. I saw him climbing up and disappearing behind the rock ledge. Yet the feeling of being alone did not bother me at all; I squatted there in a state of absolute confidence and abandonment. The roar again became audible; it was very intense, like the noise made by a high wind. Listening to it as carefully as I could, I was able to detect a definite melody. It was a composite of high-pitched sounds, like human voices, accompanied by a deep bass drum. I focused all my attention on the melody, and again noticed that the systole and diastole of my heart coincided with the sound of the bass drum, and with the pattern of the music.

I stood up and the melody stopped. I tried to listen to my heartbeat, but it was not detectable. I squatted again, thinking that perhaps the position of my body had caused or induced the sounds! But nothing happened! Not a sound! Not even my heart! I thought I had had enough, but as I stood up to leave, I felt a tremor of the earth. The ground under my feet was shaking. I was losing my balance. I fell backward and remained on my back while the earth shook violently. I tried to grab a rock or a plant, but something was sliding under me. I jumped up, stood for a moment, and fell down again. The ground on which I sat was moving, sliding into the water like a raft. I remained motionless, stunned by a terror that was, like everything else, unique, uninterrupted, and absolute.

I moved through the water of the black lake perched on a piece of soil that looked like an earthen log. I had the feeling I was going in a southerly direction, transported by the current. I could see the water moving and swirling around. It felt cold, and oddly heavy, to the touch. I fancied it alive.

There were no distinguishable shores or landmarks, and I can't

recall the thoughts or the feelings that must have come to me during this trip. After what seemed like hours of drifting, my raft made a right-angle turn to the left, the east. It continued to slide on the water for a very short distance, and unexpectedly rammed against something. The impact threw me forward. I closed my eyes and felt a sharp pain as my knees and my outstretched arms hit the ground. After a moment I looked up. I was lying on the dirt. It was as though my earthen log had merged with the land. I sat up and turned around. The water was receding! It moved backward, like a wave in reverse, until it disappeared.

I sat there for a long time, trying to collect my thoughts and resolve all that had happened into a coherent unit. My entire body ached. My throat felt like an open sore; I had bitten my lips when I "landed." I stood up. The wind made me realize I was cold. My clothes were wet. My hands and jaws and knees shook so violently that I had to lie down again. Drops of perspiration slid into my eyes and burned them until I yelled with pain.

After a while I regained a measure of stability and stood up. In the dark twilight, the scene was very clear. I took a couple of steps. A distinct sound of many human voices came to me. They seemed to be talking loudly. I followed the sound; I walked for about fifty yards and came to a sudden stop. I had reached a dead end. The place where I stood was a corral formed by enormous boulders. I could distinguish another row, and then another, and another, until they merged into the sheer mountain. From among them came the most exquisite music. It was a fluid, uninterrupted, eerie flow of sounds.

At the foot of one boulder I saw a man sitting on the ground, his face turned almost in profile. I approached him until I was perhaps ten feet away; then he turned his head and looked at me. I stopped—his eyes were the water I had just seen! They had the same enormous volume, the sparkling of gold and black. His head was pointed like a strawberry; his skin was green, dotted with innumerable warts. Except for the pointed shape, his head was exactly like the surface of the peyote plant. I stood in front of him, staring; I couldn't take my eyes away from him. I felt he was deliberately pressing on my chest with the weight of his eyes. I was choking. I lost my balance and fell to the ground. His eyes turned away. I heard him talking to me. At first his voice was like the soft rustle of a light breeze. Then I heard it as music—as a melody of voices—and I "knew" it was saying, "What do you want?"

I knelt before him and talked about my life, then wept. He looked at me again. I felt his eyes pulling me away, and I thought that moment would be the moment of my death. He signaled me to come closer. I vacillated for an instant before I took a step forward. As I came closer

he turned his eyes away from me and showed me the back of his hand. The melody said, "Look!" There was a round hole in the middle of his hand. "Look!" said the melody again. I looked into the hole and I saw myself. I was very old and feeble and was running stooped over, with bright sparks flying all around me. Then three of the sparks hit me, two in the head and one in the left shoulder. My figure, in the hole, stood up for a moment until it was fully vertical, and then disappeared together with the hole.

Mescalito turned his eyes to me again. They were so close to me that I "heard" them rumble softly with that peculiar sound I had heard many times that night. They became peaceful by degrees until they were like a quiet pond rippled by gold and black flashes.

He turned his eyes away once more and hopped like a cricket for perhaps fifty yards. He hopped again and again, and was gone.

The next thing I remember is that I began to walk. Very rationally I tried to recognize landmarks, such as mountains in the distance, in order to orient myself. I had been obsessed by cardinal points throughout the whole experience, and I believed that north had to be to my left. I walked in that direction for quite a while before I realized that it was daytime, and that I was no longer using my "night vision." I remembered I had a watch and looked at the time. It was eight o'clock.

It was about ten o'clock when I got to the ledge where I had been the night before. Don Juan was lying on the ground asleep.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

I sat down to catch my breath.

After a long silence he asked, "Did you see him?"

I began to narrate to him the sequence of my experiences from the beginning, but he interrupted me saying that all that mattered was whether I had seen him or not. He asked how close to me Mescalito was. I told him I had nearly touched him.

That part of my story interested him. He listened attentively to every detail without comment, interrupting only to ask questions about the form of the entity I had seen, its disposition, and other details about it. It was about noon when don Juan seemed to have had enough of my story. He stood up and strapped a canvas bag to my chest; he told me to walk behind him and said he was going to cut Mescalito loose and I had to receive him in my hands and place him inside the bag gently.

We drank some water and started to walk. When we reached the edge of the valley he seemed to hesitate for a moment before deciding which direction to take. Once he had made his choice we walked in a straight line.

Every time we came to a peyote plant, he squatted in front of it and

very gently cut off the top with his short, serrated knife. He made an incision level with the ground, and sprinkled the "wound," as he called it, with pure sulphur powder which he carried in a leather sack. He held the fresh button in his left hand and spread the powder with his right hand. Then he stood up and handed me the button, which I received with both hands, as he had prescribed, and placed inside the bag. "Stand erect and don't let the bag touch the ground or the bushes or anything else," he said repeatedly, as though he thought I would forget.

We collected sixty-five buttons. When the bag was completely filled, he put it on my back and strapped a new one to my chest. By the time we had crossed the plateau we had two full sacks, containing one hundred and ten peyote buttons. The bags were so heavy and bulky that I could hardly walk under their weight and volume.

Don Juan whispered to me that the bags were heavy because Mescalito wanted to return to the ground. He said it was the sadness of leaving his abode which made Mescalito heavy; my real chore was not to let the bags touch the ground, because if I did Mescalito would never allow me to take him again.

At one particular moment the pressure of the straps on my shoulders became unbearable. Something was exerting tremendous force in order to pull me down. I felt very apprehensive. I noticed that I had started to walk faster, almost at a run; I was in a way trotting behind don Juan.

Suddenly the weight on my back and chest diminished. The load became spongy and light. I ran freely to catch up with don Juan, who was ahead of me. I told him I did not feel the weight any longer. He explained that we had already left Mescalito's abode.

Tuesday, July 3, 1962

"I think Mescalito has almost accepted you," don Juan said.

"Why do you say he has *almost* accepted me, don Juan?"

"He did not kill you, or even harm you. He gave you a good fright, but not a really bad one. If he had not accepted you at all, he would have appeared to you as monstrous and full of wrath. Some people have learned the meaning of horror upon encountering him and not being accepted by him."

"If he is so terrible, why didn't you tell me about it before you took me to the field?"

"You do not have the courage to seek him deliberately. I thought it would be better if you did not know."

"But I might have died, don Juan!"

"Yes, you might have. But I was certain it was going to be alright

for you. He played with you once. He did not harm you. I thought he would also have compassion for you this time."

I asked him if he really thought Mescalito had had compassion for me. The experience had been terrifying; I felt that I had nearly died of fright.

He said Mescalito had been most kind to me; he had showed me a scene that was an answer to a question. Don Juan said Mescalito had given me a lesson. I asked him what the lesson was and what it meant. He said it would be impossible to answer that question because I had been too afraid to know *exactly* what I asked Mescalito.

Don Juan probed my memory as to what I had said to Mescalito before he showed me the scene on his hand. But I could not remember. All I remembered was my falling on my knees and "confessing my sins" to him.

Don Juan seemed uninterested in talking about it anymore. I asked him, "Can you teach me the words to the songs you chanted?"

"No, I can't. Those words are my own, the words the protector himself taught me. The songs are *my* songs. I can't tell you what they are."

"Why can't you tell me, don Juan?"

"Because these songs are a link between the protector and myself. I am sure someday he will teach you your own songs. Wait until then; and never, absolutely never, copy or ask about the songs that belong to another man."

"What was the name you called out? Can you tell me that, don Juan?"

"No. His name can never be voiced, except to call him."

"What if I want to call him myself?"

"If someday he accepts you, he will tell you his name. That name will be for you alone to use, either to call him loudly or to say quietly to yourself. Perhaps he will tell you his name is José. Who knows?"

"Why is it wrong to use his name when talking about him?"

"You have seen his eyes, haven't you? You can't fool around with the protector. That is why I can't get over the fact that he chose to play with you!"

"How can he be a protector when he hurts some people?"

"The answer is very simple. Mescalito is a protector because he is available to anyone who seeks him."

"But isn't it true that everything in the world is available to anyone who seeks it?"

"No, that is not true. The ally powers are available only to the brujos, but anyone can partake of Mescalito."

"But why then does he hurt some people?"

"Not everybody likes Mescalito; yet they all seek him with the idea of profiting without doing any work. Naturally their encounter with him is always horrifying."

"What happens when he accepts a man completely?"

"He appears to him as a man, or as a light. When a man has won this kind of acceptance, Mescalito is constant. He never changes after that. Perhaps when you meet him again he will be a light, and someday he may even take you flying and reveal all his secrets to you."

"What do I have to do to arrive at that point, don Juan?"

"You have to be a strong man, and your life has to be truthful."

"What is a truthful life?"

"A life lived with deliberateness, a good, strong life."

5

Don Juan inquired periodically, in a casual way, about the state of my *Datura* plant. In the year that had elapsed from the time I replanted the root, the plant had grown into a large bush. It had seeded and the seedpods had dried. And don Juan judged it was time for me to learn more about the devil's weed.

Sunday, January 27, 1963

Today don Juan gave me the preliminary information on the "second portion" of the *Datura* root, the second step in learning the tradition. He said the second portion of the root was the real beginning of learning; in comparison with it, the first portion was like child's play. The second portion had to be mastered; it had to be intaken at least twenty times, he said, before one could go on to the third step.

I asked, "What does the second portion do?"

"The second portion of the devil's weed is used for seeing. With it, a man can soar through the air to see what is going on at any place he chooses."

"Can a man actually fly through the air, don Juan?"

"Why not? As I have already told you, the devil's weed is for those who seek power. The man who masters the second portion can use the devil's weed to do unimaginable things to gain more power."

"What kind of things, don Juan?"

"I can't tell you that. Every man is different."

Monday, January 28, 1963

Don Juan said: "If you complete the second step successfully, I can show you only one more step. In the course of learning about the devil's weed, I realized she was not for me, and I did not pursue her path any further."

"What made you decide against it, don Juan?"

"The devil's weed nearly killed me every time I tried to use her. Once it was so bad I thought I was finished. And yet, I could have avoided all that pain."

"How? Is there a special way to avoid pain?"

"Yes, there is a way."

"Is it a formula, a procedure, or what?"

"It is a way of grabbing onto things. For instance, when I was learning about the devil's weed I was too eager. I grabbed onto things the way kids grab onto candy. The devil's weed is only one of a million paths. Anything is one of a million paths [*un camino entre cantidades de caminos*]. Therefore you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any conditions. To have such clarity you must lead a disciplined life. Only then will you know that any path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question. This question is one that only a very old man asks. My benefactor told me about it once when I was young, and my blood was too vigorous for me to understand it. Now I do understand it. I will tell you what it is: Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush, or into the bush. In my own life I could say I have traversed long, long paths, but I am not anywhere. My benefactor's question has meaning now. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you."

Sunday, April 21, 1963

On Tuesday afternoon, April 16, don Juan and I went to the hills where his *Datura* plants are. He asked me to leave him alone there, and wait for him in the car. He returned nearly three hours later carrying a package wrapped in a red cloth. As we started to drive back to his house he pointed to the bundle and said it was his last gift for me.

I asked if he meant he was not going to teach me anymore. He explained that he was referring to the fact that I had a plant fully mature and would no longer need his plants.

Late in the afternoon we sat in his room; he brought out a smoothly finished mortar and pestle. The bowl of the mortar was about six inches in diameter. He untied a large package full of small bundles, selected two of them, and placed them on a straw mat by my side; then he added four more bundles of the same size from the pack he had carried home. He said they were seeds, and I had to grind them into a fine powder. He

opened the first bundle and poured some of its contents into the mortar. The seeds were dried, round and caramel yellow in color.

I began working with the pestle; after a while he corrected me. He told me to push the pestle against one side of the mortar first, and then slide it across the bottom and up against the other side. I asked what he was going to do with the powder. He did not want to talk about it.

The first batch of seeds was extremely hard to grind. It took me four hours to finish the job. My back ached because of the position in which I had been sitting. I lay down and wanted to go to sleep right there, but don Juan opened the next bag and poured some of the contents into the mortar. The seeds this time were slightly darker than the first ones, and were lumped together. The rest of the bag's contents was a sort of powder, made of very small, round, dark granules.

I wanted something to eat, but don Juan said that if I wished to learn I had to follow the rule, and the rule was that I could only drink a little water while learning the secrets of the second portion.

The third bag contained a handful of live, black, grain weevils. And in the last bag were some fresh white seeds, almost mushy soft, but fibrous and difficult to grind into a fine paste, as he expected me to do. After I had finished grinding the contents of the four bags, don Juan measured two cups of a greenish water, poured it into a clay pot, and put the pot on the fire. When the water was boiling he added the first batch of powdered seeds. He stirred it with a long, pointed piece of wood or bone which he carried in his leather pouch. As soon as the water boiled again he added the other substances one by one, following the same procedure. Then he added one more cup of the same water, and let the mixture simmer over a low fire.

Then he told me it was time to mash the root. He carefully extracted a long piece of *Datura* root from the bundle he had carried home. The root was about sixteen inches long. It was thick, perhaps an inch and a half in diameter. He said it was the second portion, and again he had measured the second portion himself, because it was still *his* root. He said the next time I tried the devil's weed I would have to measure my own root.

He pushed the big mortar toward me, and I proceeded to pound the root in exactly the same way he had mashed the first portion. He directed me through the same steps, and again we left the mashed root soaking in water, exposed to the night air. By that time the boiling mixture had solidified in the clay pot. Don Juan took the pot from the fire, placed it inside a hanging net, and hooked it to a beam in the middle of the room.

About eight o'clock in the morning of April 17, don Juan and I

began to leach the root extract with water. It was a clear, sunny day, and don Juan interpreted the fine weather as an omen that the devil's weed liked me; he said that with me around he could remember only how bad she had been with him.

The procedure we followed in leaching the root extract was the same I had observed for the first portion. By late afternoon, after pouring out the top water for the eighth time, there was a spoonful of a yellowish substance in the bottom of the bowl.

We returned to his room where there were still two little sacks he had not touched. He opened one, slid his hand inside, and wrinkled the open end around his wrist with the other hand. He seemed to be holding something, judging by the way his hand moved inside the bag. Suddenly, with a swift movement, he peeled the bag off his hand like a glove, turning it inside out, and shoved his hand close to my face. He was holding a lizard. Its head was a few inches from my eyes. There was something strange about the lizard's mouth. I gazed at it for a moment, and then recoiled involuntarily. The lizard's mouth was sewed up with rude stitches. Don Juan ordered me to hold the lizard in my left hand. I clutched it; it wriggled against my palm. I felt nauseated. My hands began to perspire.

He took the last bag, and, repeating the same motions, he extracted another lizard. He also held it close to my face. I saw that its eyelids were sewed together. He ordered me to hold this lizard in my right hand.

By the time I had both lizards in my hands I was almost sick. I had an overpowering desire to drop them and get out of there.

"Don't squeeze them!" he said, and his voice brought me a sense of relief and direction. He asked what was wrong with me. He tried to be serious, but couldn't keep a straight face and laughed. I tried to ease my grip, but my hands were sweating so profusely that the lizards began to wriggle out of them. Their sharp little claws scratched my hands, producing an incredible feeling of disgust and nausea. I closed my eyes and clenched my teeth. One of the lizards was already sliding onto my wrist; all it needed was to yank its head from between my fingers to be free. I had a peculiar sensation of physical despair, of supreme discomfort. I growled at don Juan, between my teeth, to take the damn things off me. My head shook involuntarily. He looked at me curiously. I growled like a bear, shaking my body. He dropped the lizards into their bags and began to laugh. I wanted to laugh also, but my stomach was upset. I lay down.

I explained to him that what had affected me was the sensation of their claws on my palms; he said there were lots of things that could drive a man mad, expecially if he did not have the resolution, the

purpose, required for learning; but when a man had a clear, unbending intent, feelings were in no way a hindrance, for he was capable of controlling them.

Don Juan waited awhile and then, going through the same motions, handed me the lizards again. He told me to hold their heads up and rub them softly against my temples, as I asked them anything I wanted to know.

I did not understand at first what he wanted me to do. He told me again to ask the lizards about anything I could not find out for myself. He gave me a whole series of examples: I could find out about persons I did not see ordinarily, or about objects that were lost, or about places I had not seen. Then I realized he was talking about *divination*. I got very excited. My heart began to pound. I felt that I was losing my breath.

He warned me not to ask about personal matters this first time; he said I should think rather of something that had nothing to do with me. I had to think fast and clearly because there would be no way of reversing my thoughts.

I tried frantically to think of something I wanted to know. Don Juan urged me on imperiously, and I was astonished to realize I could think of nothing I wanted to "ask" the lizards.

After a painfully long wait I thought of something. Some time earlier a large number of books had been stolen from a reading room. It was not a personal matter, and yet I was interested in it. I had no preconceived ideas about the identity of the person, or persons, who had taken the books. I rubbed the lizards against my temples, asking them who the thief was.

After a while don Juan put the lizards inside their bags, and said that there were no deep secrets about the root and the paste. The paste was made to give direction; the root made things clear. But the real mystery was the lizards. They were the secret of the whole sorcery of the second portion, he said. I asked whether they were a special kind of lizard. He said they were. They had to come from the area of one's own plant; they had to be one's friends. And to have lizards as friends, he said, required a long period of grooming. One had to develop a strong friendship with them by giving them food and speaking kind words to them.

I asked why their friendship was so important. He said the lizards would allow themselves to be caught only if they knew the man, and whoever took the devil's weed seriously had to treat the lizards seriously. He said that, as a rule, the lizards should be caught after the paste and the root had been prepared. They should be caught in the late afternoon. If one was not on intimate terms with the lizards, he said, days could be

spent trying to catch them without success; and the paste lasts only one day. He then gave me a long series of instructions concerning the procedure to follow after the lizards had been caught.

"Once you have caught the lizards, put them in separate bags. Then take the first one and talk to her. Apologize for hurting her, and beg her to help you. And with a wooden needle sew up her mouth. Use the fibers of agave and one of the thorns of a choya to do the sewing. Draw the stitches tight. Then tell the other lizard the same things and sew her eyelids together. By the time night begins to fall you will be ready. Take the lizard with the sewed-up mouth and explain to her the matter you want to know about. Ask her to go and see for you; tell her you had to sew up her mouth so she would hurry back to you and not talk to anyone else. Let her scramble in the paste after you have rubbed it on her head; then put her on the ground. If she goes in the direction of your good fortune, the sorcery will be successful and easy. If she goes in the opposite direction, it will be unsuccessful. If the lizard moves toward you (south), you can expect more than ordinary good luck; but if she moves away from you (north), the sorcery will be terribly difficult. You may even die! So if she moves away from you, that is a good time to quit. At this point you can make the decision to quit. If you do, you will lose your capacity to command the lizards, but that is better than losing your life. On the other hand, you may decide to go ahead with the sorcery in spite of my warning. If you do, the next step is to take the other lizard and tell her to listen to her sister's story, and then describe it to you."

"But how can the lizard with the sewed-up mouth tell me what she sees? Wasn't her mouth closed to prevent her from talking?"

"Sewing up her mouth prevents her from telling her story to strangers. People say lizards are talkative; they will stop anywhere to talk. Anyway, the next step is to smear the paste on the back of her head, and then rub her head against your right temple, keeping the paste away from the center of your forehead. At the beginning of your learning it is a good idea to tie the lizard by its middle to your right shoulder with a string. Then you won't lose her or injure her. But as you progress and become more familiar with the power of the devil's weed, the lizards learn to obey your commands and will stay perched on your shoulder. After you have smeared the paste on your right temple with the lizard, dip the fingers of both hands into the gruel; first rub it on both temples and then spread it all over both sides of your head. The paste dries very fast, and can be applied as many times as necessary. Begin every time by using the lizard's head first and then your fingers. Sooner or later the lizard that went to see comes back and tells her sister all about her journey, and the blind lizard describes it to you as though you

were her kind. When the sorcery is finished, put the lizard down and let her go, but don't watch where she goes. Dig a deep hole with your bare hands and bury everything you used in it."

About 6:00 P.M. don Juan scooped the root extract out of the bowl onto a flat piece of shale; there was less than a teaspoon of a yellowish starch. He put half of it into a cup and added some yellowish water. He rotated the cup in his hand to dissolve the substance. He handed me the cup and told me to drink the mixture. It was tasteless, but it left a slightly bitter flavor in my mouth. The water was too hot and that annoyed me. My heart began pounding fast, but soon I was relaxed again.

Don Juan got the other bowl with the paste. The paste looked solid, and had a glossy surface. I tried to poke the crust with my finger, but don Juan jumped toward me and pushed my hand away from the bowl. He became very annoyed; he said it was very thoughtless of me to try that, and if I really wanted to learn there was no need to be careless. This was power, he said, pointing to the paste, and nobody could tell what kind of power it really was. It was bad enough that we had to tamper with it for our own purposes—a thing we cannot help doing because we are men, he said—but we should at least treat it with the proper respect. The mixture looked like oatmeal. Apparently it had enough starch to give it that consistency. He asked me to get the bags with the lizards. He took the lizard with the sewed-up mouth and carefully handed it over to me. He made me take it with my left hand and told me to get some of the paste with my finger and rub it on the lizard's head and then put the lizard into the pot and hold it there until the paste covered its entire body.

Then he told me to remove the lizard from the pot. He picked up the pot and led me to a rocky area not too far from his house. He pointed to a large rock and told me to sit in front of it, as if it were my *Datura* plant, and, holding the lizard in front of my face, to explain to her again what I wanted to know, and beg her to go and find the answer for me. He advised me to tell the lizard I was sorry I had to cause her discomfort, and to promise her I would be kind to all lizards in return. And then he told me to hold her between the third and fourth fingers of my left hand, where he had once made a cut, and to dance around the rock doing exactly what I had done when I replanted the root of the devil's weed; he asked me if I remembered all I had done at that time. I said I did. He emphasized that everything had to be just the same, and if I did not remember I had to wait until everything was clear in my mind. He warned me with great urgency that if I acted too quickly, without deliberation, I was going to get hurt. His last instruction was that

I was to place the lizard with the sewed-up mouth on the ground and watch where she went, so that I could determine the outcome of the experience. He said I was not to take my eyes away from the lizard, even for an instant, because it was a common trick of lizards to distract one and then dash away.

It was not quite dark yet. Don Juan looked at the sky. "I will leave you alone," he said, and walked away.

I followed all his instructions and then placed the lizard on the ground. The lizard stood motionless where I had put it. Then it looked at me, and ran to the rocks toward the east and disappeared among them.

I sat on the ground in front of the rock, as though I were facing my plant. A profound sadness overtook me. I wondered about the lizard with its sewed-up mouth. I thought of its strange journey and of how it looked at me before it ran away. It was a weird thought, an annoying projection. In my own way I too was a lizard, undergoing another strange journey. My fate was, perhaps, only to see; at that moment I felt that I would never be able to tell what I had seen. It was very dark by then. I could hardly see the rocks in front of me. I thought of don Juan's words: "The twilight—there's the crack between the worlds!"

After long hesitation I began to follow the steps prescribed. The paste, though it looked like oatmeal, did not feel like oatmeal. It was very smooth and cold. It had a peculiar, pungent smell. It produced a sensation of coolness on the skin and dried quickly. I rubbed my temples eleven times, without noticing any effect. I tried very carefully to take account of any change in perception or mood, for I did not even know what to anticipate. As a matter of fact, I could not conceive the nature of the experience, and kept on searching for clues.

The paste had dried up and scaled off my temples. I was about to rub some more of it on when I realized I was sitting on my heels in Japanese fashion. I had been sitting cross-legged and did not recall changing positions. It took some time to realize fully that I was sitting on the floor in a sort of cloister with high arches. I thought they were brick arches, but upon examining them I saw they were stone.

This transition was very difficult. It came so suddenly that I was not ready to follow. My perception of the elements of the vision was diffused, as if I were dreaming. Yet the components did not change. They remained steady, and I could stop alongside any one of them and actually examine it. The vision was not so clear or so real as one induced by peyote. It had a misty character, an intensely pleasing pastel quality.

I wondered whether I could get up or not, and the next thing I noticed was that I had moved. I was at the top of a stairway and H., a friend of mine, was standing at the bottom. Her eyes were feverish.

There was a mad glare in them. She laughed aloud and with such intensity that she was terrifying. She began coming up the stairs. I wanted to run away or take cover, because "she'd been off her rocker once." That was the thought that came to my mind. I hid behind a column and she went by me without looking. "She's going on a long trip now," was another thought that occurred to me then; and finally the last thought I remembered was, "She laughs every time she's ready to crack up."

Suddenly the scene became very clear; it was no longer like a dream. It was like an ordinary scene, but I seemed to be looking at it through window glass. I tried to touch a column but all I sensed was that I couldn't move; yet I knew I could stay as long as I wanted, viewing the scene. I was in it and yet I was not part of it.

I experienced a barrage of rational thoughts and arguments. I was, so far as I could judge, in an ordinary state of sober consciousness. Every element belonged in the realm of my normal processes. And yet I knew it was not an ordinary state.

The scene changed abruptly. It was nighttime. I was in the hall of a building. The darkness inside the building made me aware that in the earlier scene the sunlight had been beautifully clear. Yet it had been so commonplace that I did not notice it at the time. As I looked further into the new vision I saw a young man coming out of a room carrying a large knapsack on his shoulders. I didn't know who he was, although I had seen him once or twice. He walked by me and went down the stairs. By then I had forgotten my apprehension, my rational dilemmas. "Who's that guy?" I thought. "Why did I see him?"

The scene changed again and I was watching the young man deface books; he glued some of the pages together, erased markings, and so on. Then I saw him arranging the books neatly in a wooden crate. There was a pile of crates. They were not in his room, but in a storage place. Other images came to my mind, but they were not clear. The scene became foggy. I had a sensation of spinning.

Don Juan shook me by the shoulders and I woke up. He helped me to stand and we walked back to his house. It had been three and a half hours from the moment I began rubbing the paste on my temples to the time I woke up, but the visionary state could not have lasted more than ten minutes. I had no ill effects whatsoever. I was just hungry and sleepy.

Thursday, April 18, 1963

Don Juan asked me last night to describe my recent experience, but I was too sleepy to talk about it. I could not concentrate. Today, as soon as I woke up, he asked me again.

"Who told you this girl H. had been off her rocker?" he asked when I finished my story.

"Nobody. It was just one of the thoughts I had."

"Do you think they were your thoughts?"

I told him they were my thoughts, although I had no reason to think that H. had been sick. They were strange thoughts. They seemed to pop up in my mind from nowhere. He looked at me inquisitively. I asked him if he did not believe me; he laughed and said that it was my routine to be careless with my acts.

"What did I do wrong, don Juan?"

"You should have listened to the lizards."

"How should I have listened?"

"The little lizard on your shoulder was describing to you everything her sister was seeing. She was talking to you. She was telling you everything, and you paid no attention. Instead, you believed the lizard's words were your own thoughts."

"But they *were* my own thoughts, don Juan."

"They were not. That is the nature of this sorcery. Actually, the vision is to be listened to, rather than looked at. The same thing happened to me. I was about to warn you when I remembered my benefactor had not warned me."

"Was your experience like mine, don Juan?"

"No. Mine was a hellish journey. I nearly died."

"Why was it hellish?"

"Maybe because the devil's weed did not like me, or because I was not clear about what I wanted to ask. Like you yesterday. You must have had that girl in mind when you asked the question about the books."

"I can't remember it."

"The lizards are never wrong; they take every thought as a question. The lizard came back and told you things about H. no one will ever be able to understand, because not even you know what your thoughts were."

"How about the other vision I had?"

"Your thoughts must have been steady when you asked that question. And that is the way this sorcery should be conducted, with clarity."

"Do you mean the vision of the girl is not to be taken seriously?"

"How can it be taken seriously if you don't know what questions the little lizards were answering?"

"Would it be more clear to the lizard if one asked only one question?"

"Yes, that would be clearer. If you could hold one thought steadily."

"But what would happen, don Juan, if the one question was not a simple one?"

"As long as your thought is steady, and does not go into other things, it is clear to the little lizards, and then their answer is clear to you."

"Can one ask more questions of the lizards as one goes along in the vision?"

"No. The vision is to look at whatever the lizards are telling you. That is why I said it is a vision to hear more than a vision to see. That is why I asked you to deal with impersonal matters. Usually, when the question is about people, your longing to touch them or talk to them is too strong, and the lizard will stop talking and the sorcery will be dispelled. You should know much more than you do now before trying to see things that concern you personally. Next time you must listen carefully. I am sure the lizards told you many, many things, but you were not listening."

Friday, April 19, 1963

"What were all the things I ground for the paste, don Juan?"

"Seeds of devil's weed and the weevils that live off the seeds. The measure is one handful of each." He cupped his right hand to show me how much.

I asked him what would happen if one element was used by itself, without the others. He said that such a procedure would only antagonize the devil's weed and the lizards. "You must not antagonize the lizards," he said, "for the next day, during the late afternoon, you must return to the site of your plant. Speak to all lizards and ask the two that helped you in the sorcery to come out again. Search all over until it is quite dark. If you can't find them, you must try it once more the next day. If you are strong you will find both of them, and then you have to eat them, right there. And you will be endowed forever with the capacity to see the unknown. You will never need to catch lizards again to practice this sorcery. They will live inside you from then on."

"What do I do if I find only one of them?"

"If you find only one of them you must let her go at the end of your search. If you find her the first day, don't keep her, hoping you will catch the other one the next day. That will only spoil your friendship with them."

"What happens if I can't find them at all?"

"I think that would be the best thing for you. It implies that you must catch two lizards every time you want their help, but it also implies that you are free."

"What do you mean, free?"

"Free from being the slave of the devil's weed. If the lizards are to live inside you, the devil's weed will never let you go."

"Is that bad?"

"Of course it is bad. She will cut you off from everything else. You will have to spend your life grooming her as an ally. She is possessive. Once she dominates you, there is only one way to go—her way."

"What if I find that the lizards are dead?"

"If you find one or both of them dead, you must not attempt to do this sorcery for some time. Lay off for a while.

"I think this is all I need to tell you; what I have told you is the rule. Whenever you practice this sorcery by yourself, you must follow all the steps I have described while you sit in front of your plant. One more thing. You must not eat or drink until the sorcery is finished."

6

The next step in don Juan's teachings was a new aspect of mastering the second portion of the *Datura* root. In the time that elapsed between the two stages of learning don Juan inquired only about the development of my plant.

Thursday, June 27, 1963

"It is a good practice to test the devil's weed before embarking fully on her path," don Juan said.

"How do you test her, don Juan?"

"You must try another sorcery with the lizards. You have all the elements that are needed to ask one more question of the lizards, this time without my help."

"Is it very necessary that I do this sorcery, don Juan?"

"It is the best way to test the feelings of the devil's weed toward you. She tests you all the time, so it is only fair that you test her too, and if you feel anywhere along her path that for some reason you should not go on, then you must simply stop."

Saturday, June 29, 1963

I brought up the subject of the devil's weed. I wanted don Juan to tell me more about it, and yet I did not want to be committed to participate.

"The second portion is used only to divine, isn't that so, don Juan?" I asked to start the conversation.

"Not only to divine. One learns the sorcery of the lizards with the aid of the second portion, and at the same time one tests the devil's weed; but in reality the second portion is used for other purposes. The sorcery of the lizards is only the beginning."

"Then what is it used for, don Juan?"

He did not answer. He abruptly changed the subject, and asked me how big were the *Datura* plants growing around my own plant. I made a gesture of size.

Don Juan said, "I have taught you how to tell a male from a female. Now, go to your plants and bring me both. Go first to your old

plant and watch carefully the watercourse made by the rain. By now the rain must have carried the seeds far away. Watch the crevices [*zanjitas*] made by the runoff, and from them determine the direction of the flow. Then find the plant that is growing at the farthest point from your plant. All the devil's weed plants that are growing in between are yours. Later, as they seed, you can extend the size of your territory by following the watercourse from each plant along the way."

He gave me meticulous instructions on how to procure a cutting tool. The cutting of the root, he said, had to be done in the following way. First, I had to select the plant I was to cut and clear away the dirt around the place where the root joined the stem. Second, I had to repeat exactly the same dance I had performed when I replanted the root. Third, I had to cut the stem off, and leave the root in the ground. The final step was to dig out sixteen inches of root. He admonished me not to talk or to betray any feeling during this act.

"You should carry two pieces of cloth," he said. "Spread them on the ground and place the plants on them. Then cut the plants into parts and stack them up. The order is up to you; but you must always remember what order you used, because that is the way you must always do it. Bring the plants to me as soon as you have them."

Saturday, July 6, 1963

On Monday, July 1, I cut the *Datura* plants don Juan had asked for. I waited until it was fairly dark to do the dancing around the plants because I did not want anybody to see me. I felt quite apprehensive. I was sure someone was going to witness my strange acts. I had previously chosen the plants I thought were a male and a female. I had to cut off sixteen inches of the root of each one, and digging to that depth with a wooden stick was not an easy task. It took me hours. I had to finish the job in complete darkness, and when I was ready to cut them I had to use a flashlight. My original apprehension that somebody would watch me was minimal compared with the fear that someone would spot the light in the bushes.

I took the plants to don Juan's house on Tuesday, July 2. He opened the bundles and examined the pieces. He said he still had to give me the seeds of his plants. He pushed a mortar in front of me. He took a glass jar and emptied its contents—dried seeds lumped together—into the mortar.

I asked him what they were, and he said they were seeds eaten by weevils. There were quite a few bugs among the seeds—little black grain weevils. He said they were special bugs, and that we had to take them out and put them into a separate jar. He handed me another jar,

one-third full of the same kind of weevils. A piece of paper was stuffed into the jar to keep the weevils from escaping.

"Next time you will have to use the bugs from your own plants," don Juan said. "What you do is to cut the seedpods that have tiny holes; they are full of bugs. Open the pod and scrape everything into a jar. Collect one handful of bugs and put them into another container. Treat them rough. Don't be considerate or delicate with them. Measure one handful of the lumped seeds that the bugs have eaten and one handful of the bugs' powder, and bury the rest any place in that direction [here he pointed southeast] from your plant. Then gather good, dry seeds and store them separately. You can gather all you want. You can always use them. It is a good idea to get the seeds out of the pods there so that you can bury everything at once."

Next don Juan told me to grind the lumped seeds first, then the weevil eggs, then the bugs, and last the good, dry seeds.

When all of them were mashed into a fine powder don Juan took the pieces of *Datura* I had cut and stacked up. He separated the male root and wrapped it gently in a piece of cloth. He handed me the rest, and told me to cut everything into little pieces, mash them well, and then put every bit of the juice into a pot. He said I had to mash them in the same order in which I had stacked them up.

After I had finished he told me to measure one cup of boiling water and stir it with everything in the pot, and then to add two more cups. He handed me a smoothly finished bone stick. I stirred the mush with it and put the pot on the fire. Then he said we had to prepare the root, and for that we had to use the larger mortar because the male root could not be cut at all. We went to the back of the house. He had the mortar ready, and I proceeded to pound the root as I had done before. We left the root soaking in water, exposed to the night air, and went inside the house.

He told me to watch the mixture in the pot. I was to let it boil until it had some body—until it was hard to stir. Then he lay down on his mat and went to sleep. The mush had boiled for at least an hour when I noticed that it was getting harder and harder to stir. I judged it must be ready, and pulled it off the fire. I put it in the net under the eaves, and went to sleep.

I woke up when don Juan got up. The sun was shining in a clear sky. It was a hot, dry day. Don Juan commented again that he was sure the devil's weed liked me.

We proceeded to treat the root, and at the end of the day we had quite a bit of yellowish substance in the bottom of the bowl. Don Juan poured off the top water. I thought that was the end of the procedure, but he filled the bowl with boiling water again.

He brought down the pot with the mush from under the roof. The mush seemed to be almost dry. He took the pot inside the house, placed it carefully on the floor, and sat down. Then he began to talk.

"My benefactor told me it was permissible to mix the plant with lard. And that is what you are going to do. My benefactor mixed it with lard for me, but, as I have already said, I never was very fond of the plant and never really tried to become one with her. My benefactor told me that for best results, for those who really want to master the power, the proper thing is to mix the plant with the lard of a wild boar. The fat of the intestines is the best. But it is for you to choose. Perhaps the turn of the wheel will decide that you take the devil's weed as an ally, in which case I will advise you, as my benefactor advised me, to hunt a wild boar and get the fat from the intestines [*sebo de tripa*]. In other times, when the devil's weed was tops, brujos used to go on special hunting trips to get fat from wild boars. They sought the biggest and strongest males. They had a special magic for wild boars; they took from them a special power, so special that it was hard to believe, even in those days. But that power is lost. I don't know anything about it. And I don't know any man who knows about it. Perhaps the weed herself will teach you all that."

Don Juan measured a handful of lard, dumped it into the bowl containing the dry gruel, and scraped the lard left on his hand onto the edge of the pot. He told me to stir the contents until they were smooth and thoroughly mixed.

I whipped the mixture for nearly three hours. Don Juan looked at it from time to time and thought it was not done yet. Finally he seemed satisfied. The air whipped into the paste had given it a light-gray color and the consistency of jelly. He hung the bowl from the roof next to the other bowl. He said he was going to leave it there until the next day because it would take two days to prepare this second portion. He told me not to eat anything in the meantime. I could have water, but no food at all.

The next day, Thursday, July 4, don Juan directed me to leach the root four times. By the last time I poured the water out of the bowl it had already become dark. We sat on the porch. He put both bowls in front of him. The root extract measured a teaspoon of a whitish starch. He put it into a cup and added water. He rotated the cup in his hand to dissolve the substance and then handed the cup to me. He told me to drink all that was in the cup. I drank it fast and then put the cup on the floor and slumped back. My heart began pounding; I felt I could not breathe. Don Juan ordered me, matter-of-factly, to take off all my clothes. I asked him why, and he said I had to rub myself with the paste. I

hesitated. I did not know whether to undress. Don Juan urged me to hurry up. He said there was very little time to fool around. I removed all my clothes.

He took his bone stick and cut two horizontal lines on the surface of the paste, thus dividing the contents of the bowl into three equal parts. Then, starting at the center of the top line, he cut a vertical line perpendicular to the other two, dividing the paste into five parts. He pointed to the bottom right area, and said that was for my left foot. The area above it was for my left leg. The top and largest part was for my genitals. The next one below, on the left side, was for my right leg, and the area at the bottom left was for my right foot. He told me to apply the part of the paste designated for my left foot to the sole of my foot and rub it thoroughly. Then he guided me in applying the paste on the inside part of my whole left leg, on my genitals, down the inside of my whole right leg, and finally on the sole of my right foot.

I followed his directions. The paste was cold and had a particularly strong odor. When I had finished applying it I straightened up. The smell from the mixture entered my nostrils. It was suffocating me. The pungent odor was actually choking me. It was like a gas of some sort. I tried to breathe through my mouth and tried to talk to don Juan, but I couldn't.

Don Juan kept staring at me. I took a step toward him. My legs were rubbery and long, extremely long. I took another step. My knee joints felt springy, like a vault pole; they shook and vibrated and contracted elastically. I moved forward. The motion of my body was slow and shaky; it was more like a tremor forward and up. I looked down and saw don Juan sitting below me, way below me. The momentum carried me forward one more step, which was even more elastic and longer than the preceding one. And from there I soared. I remember coming down once; then I pushed up with both feet, sprang backward, and glided on my back. I saw the dark sky above me, and the clouds going by me. I jerked my body so I could look down. I saw the dark mass of the mountains. My speed was extraordinary. My arms were fixed, folded against my sides. My head was the directional unit. If I kept it bent backward I made vertical circles. I changed directions by turning my head to the side. I enjoyed such freedom and swiftness as I had never known before. The marvelous darkness gave me a feeling of sadness, of longing, perhaps. It was as if I had found a place where I belonged—the darkness of the night. I tried to look around, but all I sensed was that the night was serene, and yet it held so much power.

Suddenly I knew it was time to come down; it was as if I had been given an order I had to obey. And I began descending like a feather with

lateral motions. That type of movement made me very ill. It was slow and jerky, as though I were being lowered by pulleys. I got sick. My head was bursting with the most excruciating pain. A kind of blackness enveloped me. I was very aware of the feeling of being suspended in it.

The next thing I remember is the feeling of waking up. I was in my bed in my own room. I sat up. And the image of my room dissolved. I stood up. I was naked! The motion of standing made me sick again.

I recognized some of the landmarks. I was about half a mile from don Juan's house, near the place of his *Datura* plants. Suddenly everything fitted into place, and I realized that I would have to walk all the way back to his house, naked. To be deprived of clothes was a profound psychological disadvantage, but there was nothing I could do to solve the problem. I thought of making myself a skirt with branches, but the thought seemed ludicrous and, besides, it was soon going to be dawn, for the morning twilight was already clear. I forgot about my discomfort and my nausea and started to walk toward the house. I was obsessed with the fear of being discovered. I watched for people and dogs. I tried to run, but I hurt my feet on the small, sharp stones. I walked slowly. It was already very clear. Then I saw somebody coming up the road, and I quickly jumped behind the bushes. My situation seemed so incongruous to me. A moment before I had been enjoying the unbelievable pleasure of flying; the next minute I found myself hiding, embarrassed by my own nakedness. I thought of jumping out on the road again and running with all my might past the person who was coming. I thought he would be so startled that by the time he realized it was a naked man I would have left him far behind. I thought all that, but I did not dare to move.

The person coming up the road was just upon me and stopped walking. I heard him calling my name. It was don Juan, and he had my clothes. As I put them on he looked at me and laughed; he laughed so hard that I wound up laughing too.

The same day, Friday, July 5, late in the afternoon, don Juan asked me to narrate the details of my experience. As carefully as I could, I related the whole episode.

"The second portion of the devil's weed is used to fly," he said when I had finished. "The unguent by itself is not enough. My benefactor said that it is the root that gives direction and wisdom, and it is the cause of flying. As you learn more, and take it often in order to fly, you will begin to see everything with great clarity. You can soar through the air for hundreds of miles to see what is happening at any place you want, or to deliver a fatal blow to your enemies far away. As you become familiar with the devil's weed, she will teach you how to do such things. For instance, she has taught you already how to change directions. In the same manner, she will teach you unimaginable things."

"Like what, don Juan?"

"That I can't tell you. Every man is different. My benefactor never told me what he had learned. He told me how to proceed, but never what he saw. That is only for oneself."

"But I tell you all I see, don Juan."

"Now you do. Later you will not. The next time you take the devil's weed you will do it by yourself, around your own plants, because that is where you will land, around your plants. Remember that. That is why I came down here to my plants to look for you."

He said nothing more, and I fell asleep. When I woke up in the evening, I felt invigorated. For some reason I exuded a sort of physical contentment. I was happy, satisfied.

Don Juan asked me, "Did you like the night? Or was it frightful?"

I told him that the night was truly magnificent.

"How about your headache? Was it very bad?" he asked.

"The headache was as strong as all the other feelings. It was the worst pain I have ever had," I said.

"Would that keep you from wanting to taste the power of the devil's weed again?"

"I don't know. I don't want it now, but later I might. I really don't know, don Juan."

There was a question I wanted to ask him. I knew he was going to evade it, so I waited for him to mention the subject; I waited all day. Finally, before I left that evening, I had to ask him, "Did I really fly, don Juan?"

"That is what you told me. Didn't you?"

"I know, don Juan. I mean, did my body fly? Did I take off like a bird?"

"You always ask me questions I cannot answer. You flew. That is what the second portion of the devil's weed is for. As you take more of it, you will learn how to fly perfectly. It is not a simple matter. A man *flies* with the help of the second portion of the devil's weed. That is all I can tell you. What you want to know makes no sense. Birds fly like birds and a man who has taken the devil's weed flies as such [*el enyerbado vuela así*]."

"As birds do? [*¿Así como los pájaros?*]."

"No, he flies as a man who has taken the weed [*No, así como los enyerbados*]."

"Then I didn't really fly, don Juan. I flew in my imagination, in my mind alone. Where was my body?"

"In the bushes," he replied cuttingly, but immediately broke into laughter again. "The trouble with you is that you understand things in only one way. You don't think a man flies; and yet a brujo can move a

thousand miles in one second to see what is going on. He can deliver a blow to his enemies long distances away. So, does he or doesn't he fly?"

"You see, don Juan, you and I are differently oriented. Suppose, for the sake of argument, one of my fellow students had been here with me when I took the devil's weed. Would he have been able to see me flying?"

"There you go again with your questions about what would happen if . . . It is useless to talk that way. If your friend, or anybody else, takes the second portion of the weed all he can do is fly. Now, if he had simply watched you, he might have seen you flying, or he might not. That depends on the man."

"But what I mean, don Juan, is that if you and I look at a bird and see it fly, we agree that it is flying. But if two of my friends had seen me flying as I did last night, would they have agreed that I was flying?"

"Well, they might have. You agree that birds fly because you have seen them flying. Flying is a common thing with birds. But you will not agree on other things birds do, because you have never seen birds doing them. If your friends knew about men flying with the devil's weed, then they would agree."

"Let's put it another way, don Juan. What I meant to say is that if I had tied myself to a rock with a heavy chain I would have flown just the same, because my body had nothing to do with my flying."

Don Juan looked at me incredulously. "If you tie yourself to a rock," he said, "I'm afraid you will have to fly holding the rock with its heavy chain."

7

Collecting the ingredients and preparing them for the smoke mixture formed a yearly cycle. The first year don Juan taught me the procedure. In December of 1962, the second year, when the cycle was renewed, don Juan merely directed me; I collected the ingredients myself, prepared them, and put them away until the next year.

In December, 1963, a new cycle started for the third time. Don Juan then showed me how to combine the dried ingredients I had collected and prepared the year before. He put the smoking mixture into a small leather bag, and we set out once again to collect the different components for the following year.

Don Juan seldom mentioned the "little smoke" during the year that elapsed between the two gatherings. Every time I went to see him, however, he gave me his pipe to hold, and the procedure of "getting familiar" with the pipe developed in the way he had described. He put the pipe in my hands very gradually. He demanded absolute and careful concentration on that action, and gave me very explicit directions. Any fumbling with the pipe would inevitably result in his or my death, he said.

As soon as we had finished the third collecting and preparing cycle, don Juan began to talk about the smoke as an ally for the first time in more than a year.

Monday, December 23, 1963

We were driving back to his house after collecting some yellow flowers for the mixture. They were one of the necessary ingredients. I made the remark that this year we did not follow the same order in collecting the ingredients as we had the year before. He laughed and said the smoke was not moody or petty, as the devil's weed was. For the smoke, the order of collecting was unimportant; all that was required was that the man using the mixture had to be accurate and exact.

I asked don Juan what we were going to do with the mixture he had prepared and given me to keep. He replied that it was mine, and added that I had to use it as soon as possible. I asked how much of it was needed each time. The small bag he had given me contained approxi-

mately three times the amount a small tobacco bag would hold. He told me I would have to use all the contents of my bag in one year, and how much I needed each time I smoked was a personal matter.

I wanted to know what would happen if I never finished the bag. Don Juan said that nothing would happen; the smoke did not require anything. He himself did not need to smoke anymore, and yet he made a new mixture each year. He then corrected himself and said that he *rarely* had to smoke. I asked what he did with the unused mixture, but he did not answer. He said the mixture was no longer good if not used in one year.

At this point we got into a long argument. I did not phrase my questions correctly and his answers seemed confusing. I wanted to know if the mixture would lose its hallucinogenic properties, or power, after a year, thus making the yearly cycle necessary; but he insisted that the mixture would not lose its power at any time. The only thing that happened, he said, was that a man did not need it anymore because he had made a new supply; he had to dispose of the remaining old mixture in a specific way, which don Juan did not want to reveal to me at that point.

Tuesday, December 24, 1963

"You said, don Juan, you don't have to smoke anymore."

"Yes, because the smoke is my ally I don't need to smoke anymore. I can call him anytime, anyplace."

"Do you mean he comes to you even if you do not smoke?"

"I mean I go to him freely."

"Will I be able to do that, too?"

"If you succeed in getting him as your ally, you will."

Tuesday, December 31, 1963

On Thursday, December 26, I had my first experience with don Juan's ally, the smoke. All day I drove him around and did chores for him. We returned to his house in the late afternoon. I mentioned that we had had nothing to eat all day. He was completely unconcerned over that; instead he began to tell me it was imperative for me to become familiar with the smoke. He said I had to experience it myself to realize how important it was as an ally.

Without giving me an opportunity to say anything, don Juan told me he was going to light his pipe for me, right then. I tried to dissuade him, arguing that I did not believe I was ready. I told him I felt I had not handled the pipe for a long enough time. But he said there was not much time left for me to learn, and I had to use the pipe very soon. He brought

the pipe out of its sack and fondled it. I sat on the floor next to him and frantically tried to get sick and pass out—to do anything to put off this unavoidable step.

The room was almost dark. Don Juan had lighted the kerosene lamp and placed it in a corner. Usually the lamp kept the room in a relaxing semidarkness, its yellowish light always soothing. This time, however, the light seemed dim and unusually red; it was unnerving. He untied his small bag of mixture without removing it from the cord fastened around his neck. He brought the pipe close to him, put it inside his shirt, and poured some of the mixture into the bowl. He made me watch the procedure, pointing out that if some of the mixture spilled it would fall inside his shirt.

Don Juan filled three-fourths of the bowl, then tied the bag with one hand while holding the pipe in the other. He picked up a small clay dish, handed it to me, and asked me to get some small charcoals from the fire outside. I went to the back of the house and scooped a bunch of charcoals from the adobe stove. I hurried back to his room. I felt deep anxiety. It was like a premonition.

I sat next to don Juan and gave him the dish. He looked at it and calmly said the charcoals were too big. He wanted smaller ones that would fit inside the pipe bowl. I went back to the stove and got some. He took the new dish of charcoals and put it before him. He was sitting with his legs crossed and tucked under him. He glanced at me out of the corner of his eye and leaned forward until his chin nearly touched the charcoals. He held the pipe in his left hand, and with an extremely swift movement of his right hand picked up a burning piece of charcoal and put it into the bowl of the pipe; then he sat up straight and, holding the pipe with both hands, put it to his mouth and puffed three times. He stretched his arms to me and told me in a forceful whisper to take the pipe with both hands and smoke.

The thought of refusing the pipe and running away crossed my mind for an instant; but don Juan demanded again—still in a whisper—that I take the pipe and smoke. I looked at him. His eyes were fixed on me. But his stare was friendly, concerned. It was clear that I had made the choice a long time before; there was no alternative but to do what he said.

I took the pipe and nearly dropped it. It was hot! I put it to my mouth with extreme care because I imagined its heat would be intolerable on my lips. But I felt no heat at all.

Don Juan told me to inhale. The smoke flowed into my mouth, and seemed to circulate there. It was heavy! I felt as though I had a mouthful of dough. The simile occurred to me although I had never had a

mouthful of dough. The smoke was also like menthol, and the inside of my mouth suddenly became cold. It was a refreshing sensation. "Again! Again!" I heard don Juan whispering. I felt the smoke seep inside my body freely, almost without my control. I needed no more urging from don Juan. Mechanically I kept inhaling.

Suddenly don Juan leaned over and took the pipe from my hands. He tapped the ashes gently on the dish with the charcoals, then he wet his finger with saliva and rotated it inside the bowl to clean its sides. He blew through the stem repeatedly. I saw him put the pipe back into its sheath. His actions held my interest.

When he had finished cleaning the pipe and putting it away, he stared at me, and I realized for the first time that my whole body was numb, mentholated. My face felt heavy and my jaws hurt. I could not keep my mouth closed, but there was no saliva flow. My mouth was burning dry, and yet I was not thirsty. I began to sense an unusual heat all over my head. A cold heat! My breath seemed to cut my nostrils and upper lip every time I exhaled. But it didn't burn; it hurt like a piece of ice.

Don Juan sat next to me, to my right, and without moving held the pipe sheath against the floor as though keeping it down by force. My hands were heavy. My arms sagged, pulling my shoulders down. My nose was running. I wiped it with the back of my hand, and my upper lip was rubbed off! I wiped my face, and all the flesh was wiped off! I was melting! I felt as if my flesh was actually melting. I jumped to my feet and tried to grab hold of something—anything—with which to support myself. I was experiencing a terror I had never felt before. I held onto a pole that don Juan keeps stuck on the floor in the center of his room. I stood there for a moment, then I turned to look at him. He was still sitting motionless, holding his pipe, staring at me.

My breath was painfully hot (or cold?). It was choking me. I bent my head forward to rest it on the pole, but apparently I missed it, and my head kept on moving downward beyond the point where the pole was. I stopped when I was nearly down to the floor. I pulled myself up. The pole was there in front of my eyes! I tried again to rest my head on it. I tried to control myself and to be aware, and kept my eyes open as I leaned forward to touch the pole with my forehead. It was a few inches from my eyes, but as I put my head against it I had the queerest feeling that I was going right through it.

In a desperate search for a rational explanation I concluded that my eyes were distorting depth, and that the pole must have been ten feet away, even though I saw it directly in front of my face. I then conceived a logical, rational way to check the position of the pole. I began moving

sideways around it, one little step at a time. My argument was that in walking around the pole in that way I couldn't possibly make a circle more than five feet in diameter; if the pole was really ten feet away from me, or beyond my reach, a moment would come when I would have my back to it. I trusted that at that moment the pole would vanish, because in reality it would be behind me.

I then proceeded to circle the pole, but it remained in front of my eyes as I went around it. In a fit of frustration I grabbed it with both hands, but my hands went through it. I was grabbing the air. I carefully calculated the distance between the pole and myself. I figured it must be three feet. That is, my eyes perceived it as three feet. I played for a moment with the perception of depth by moving my head from one side to the other, focusing each eye in turn on the pole and then on the background. According to my way of judging depth, the pole was unmistakably before me, possibly three feet away. Stretching out my arms to protect my head, I charged with all my strength. The sensation was the same—I went through the pole. This time I went all the way to the floor. I stood up again. And standing up was perhaps the most unusual of all the acts I performed that night. I thought myself up! In order to get up I did not use my muscles and skeletal frame in the way I am accustomed to doing, because I no longer had control over them. I knew it the instant I hit the ground. But my curiosity about the pole was so strong I "thought myself up" in a kind of reflex action. And before I fully realized I could not move, I was up.

I called to don Juan for help. At one moment I yelled frantically at the top of my voice, but don Juan did not move. He kept on looking at me, sideways, as though he didn't want to turn his head to face me fully. I took a step toward him, but instead of moving forward I staggered backward and fell against the wall. I knew I had rammed against it with my back, yet it did not feel hard; I was completely suspended in a soft, spongy substance—it was the wall. My arms were stretched out laterally, and slowly my whole body seemed to sink into the wall. I could only look forward into the room. Don Juan was still watching me, but he made no move to help me. I made a supreme effort to jerk my body out of the wall, but it only sank deeper and deeper. In the midst of indescribable terror, I felt that the spongy wall was closing in on my face. I tried to shut my eyes but they were fixed open.

I don't remember what else happened. Suddenly don Juan was in front of me, a short distance away. We were in the other room. I saw his table and the dirt stove with the fire burning, and with the corner of my eye I distinguished the fence outside the house. I could see everything very clearly. Don Juan had brought the kerosene lantern and hung it

from the beam in the middle of the room. I tried to look in a different direction, but my eyes were set to see only straight forward. I couldn't distinguish, or feel, any part of my body. My breathing was undetectable. But my thoughts were extremely lucid. I was clearly aware of whatever was taking place in front of me. Don Juan walked toward me, and my clarity of mind ended. Something seemed to stop inside me. There were no more thoughts. I saw don Juan coming and I hated him. I wanted to tear him apart. I could have killed him then, but I could not move. At first I vaguely sensed a pressure on my head, but it also disappeared. There was only one thing left—an overwhelming anger at don Juan. I saw him only a few inches from me. I wanted to claw him apart. I felt I was groaning. Something in me began to convulse, I heard don Juan talking to me. His voice was soft and soothing, and, I felt, infinitely pleasing. He came even closer and started to recite a Spanish lullaby.

"Lady Saint Ana, why does the baby cry? For an apple he has lost. I will give you one. I will give you two. One for the boy and one for you [*¿Señora Santa Ana, porque llora el niño? Por una manzana que se le ha perdido. Yo le daré una. Yo le daré dos. Una para el niño y otra para vos*]" A warmth pervaded me. It was a warmth of heart and feelings. Don Juan's words were a distant echo. They recalled the forgotten memories of childhood.

The violence I had felt before disappeared. The resentment changed into a longing—a joyous affection for don Juan. He said I must struggle not to fall asleep; that I no longer had a body and was free to turn into anything I wanted. He stepped back. My eyes were at a normal level as though I were standing in front of him. He extended both his arms toward me and told me to come inside them.

Either I moved forward, or he came closer to me. His hands were almost on my face—on my eyes, although I did not feel them. "Get inside my chest," I heard him say. I felt I was engulfing him. It was the same sensation of the sponginess of the wall.

Then I could hear only his voice commanding me to look and see. I could not distinguish him anymore. My eyes were apparently open for I saw flashes of light on a red field; it was as though I was looking at a light through my closed eyelids. Then my thoughts were turned on again. They came back in a fast barrage of images—faces, scenery. Scenes without any coherence popped up and disappeared. It was like a fast dream in which images overlap and change. Then the thoughts began to diminish in number and intensity, and soon they were gone again. There was only an awareness of affection, of being happy. I couldn't distinguish

any shapes or light. All of a sudden I was pulled up. I distinctly felt I was being lifted. And I was free, moving with tremendous lightness and speed in water or air. I swam like an eel; I contorted and twisted and soared up and down at will. I felt a cold wind blowing all around me, and I began to float like a feather back and forth, down, and down, and down.

Saturday, December 28, 1963

I woke up yesterday late in the afternoon. Don Juan told me I had slept peacefully for nearly two days. I had a splitting headache. I drank some water and got sick. I felt tired, extremely tired, and after eating I went back to sleep.

Today I felt perfectly relaxed again. Don Juan and I talked about my experience with the little smoke. Thinking that he wanted me to tell the whole story the way I always did, I began to describe my impressions, but he stopped me and said it was not necessary. He told me I had really not done anything, and that I had fallen asleep right away, so there was nothing to talk about.

"How about the way I felt? Isn't that important at all?" I insisted.

"No, not with the smoke. Later on, when you learn how to travel, we will talk; when you learn how to get into things."

"Does one really 'get into' things?"

"Don't you remember? You went *into* and *through* that wall."

"I think I really went *out* of my mind."

"No, you didn't."

"Did you behave the same way I did when you smoked for the first time, don Juan?"

"No, it wasn't the same. We have different characters."

"How did you behave?"

Don Juan did not answer. I rephrased the question and asked it again. But he said he did not remember his experiences, and that my question was comparable to asking a fisherman how he felt the first time he fished.

He said the smoke as an ally was unique, and I reminded him that he had also said Mescalito was unique. He argued that each was unique, but that they differed in quality.

"Mescalito is a protector because he talks to you and can guide your acts," he said. "Mescalito teaches the right way to live. And you can see him because he is outside you. The smoke, on the other hand, is an ally. It transforms you and gives you power without ever showing its presence. You can't talk to it. But you know it exists because it takes

your body away and makes you as light as air. Yet you never see it. But it is there giving you power to accomplish unimaginable things, such as when it takes your body away."

"I really felt I had lost my body, don Juan."

"You did."

"You mean, I really didn't have a body?"

"What do *you* think yourself?"

"Well, I don't know. All I can tell you is what I felt."

"That is all there is in reality—what you felt."

"But how did you see me, don Juan? How did I appear to you?"

"How I saw you does not matter. It is like the time when you grabbed the pole. You felt it was not there and you went around it to make sure it was there. But when you jumped at it you felt again that it was not really there."

"But you saw me as I am now, didn't you?"

"No! You were NOT as you are now!"

"True! I admit that. But I had my body, didn't I, although *I* couldn't feel it?"

"No! Goddammit! You did not have a body like the body you have today!"

"What happened to my body then?"

"I thought you understood. The little smoke took your body."

"But where did it go?"

"How in hell do you expect me to know that?"

It was useless to persist in trying to get a "rational" explanation. I told him I did not want to argue or to ask stupid questions, but if I accepted the idea that it was possible to lose my body I would lose all my rationality.

He said that I was exaggerating, as usual, and that I did not, nor was I going to, lose anything because of the little smoke.

Tuesday, January 28, 1964

I asked don Juan what he thought of the idea of giving the smoke to anyone who wanted the experience.

He indignantly replied that to give the smoke to anyone would be just the same as killing him, for he would have no one to guide him. I asked don Juan to explain what he meant. He said I was *there,* alive and talking to him, because he had brought me back. He had restored my body. Without him I would never have awakened.

"How did you restore my body, don Juan?"

"You will learn that later, but you will have to learn to do it all by yourself. That is the reason I want you to learn as much as you can while

I am still around. You have wasted enough time asking stupid questions about nonsense. But perhaps it is not in your destiny to learn all about the little smoke."

"Well, what shall I do, then?"

"Let the smoke teach you as much as you can learn."

"Does the smoke also teach?"

"Of course it teaches."

"Does it teach as Mescalito does?"

"No, it is not a teacher as Mescalito is. It does not show the same things."

"But what does the smoke teach, then?"

"It shows you how to handle its power, and to learn that you must take it as many times as you can."

"Your ally is very frightening, don Juan. It was unlike anything I ever experienced before. I thought I had lost my mind."

For some reason this was the most poignant image that came to my mind. I viewed the total event from the peculiar stand of having had other hallucinogenic experiences from which to draw a comparison, and the only thing that occurred to me, over and over again, was that with the smoke one loses one's mind.

Don Juan discarded my simile, saying that what I felt was its unimaginable power. And to handle that power, he said, one has to live a strong life. The idea of the strong life not only pertains to the preparation period, but also entails the attitude of the man after the experience. He said the smoke is so strong one can match it only with strength; otherwise, one's life would be shattered to bits.

I asked him if the smoke had the same effect on everyone. He said it produced a transformation, but not in everyone.

"Then, what is the special reason the smoke produced the transformation in me?" I asked.

"That, I think, is a very silly question. You have followed obediently every step required. It is no mystery that the smoke transformed you."

I asked him again to tell me about my appearance. I wanted to know how I looked, for the image of a bodiless being he had planted in my mind was understandably unbearable.

He said that to tell the truth he was afraid to look at me; he felt the same way his benefactor must have felt when he saw don Juan smoking for the first time.

"Why were you afraid? Was I that frightening?" I asked.

"I had never seen anyone smoking before."

"Didn't you see your benefactor smoke?"

"No."

"You have never seen even yourself?"

"How could I?"

"You could smoke in front of a mirror."

He did not answer, but stared at me and shook his head. I asked him again if it was possible to look into a mirror. He said it would be possible, although it would be useless because one would probably die of fright, if of nothing else.

I said, "Then one must look frightful."

"I have wondered all my life about the same thing," he said. "Yet I did not ask, nor did I look into a mirror. I did not even think of that."

"How can I find out then?"

"You will have to wait, the same way I did, until you give the smoke to someone else—if you ever master it, of course. Then you will see how a man looks. That is the rule."

"What would happen if I smoked in front of a camera and took a picture of myself?"

"I don't know. The smoke would probably turn against you. But I suppose you find it so harmless you feel you can play with it."

I told him I did not mean to play, but that he had told me before that the smoke did not require steps, and I thought there would be no harm in wanting to know how one looked. He corrected me, saying that he had meant there was no necessity to follow a specific order, as there is with the devil's weed; all that was needed with the smoke was the proper attitude, he said. From that point of view one had to be exact in following the rule. He gave me an example, explaining that it did not matter what ingredient for the mixture was picked first, so long as the amount was correct.

I asked if there would be any harm in my telling others about my experience. He replied that the only secrets never to be revealed were how to make the mixture, how to move around, and how to return; other matters concerning the subject were of no importance.

8

My last encounter with Mescalito was a cluster of four sessions which took place within four consecutive days. Don Juan called this long session a *mitote*. It was a peyote ceremony for *peyoteros* and apprentices. There were two older men, about don Juan's age, one of whom was the leader, and five younger men including myself.

The ceremony took place in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, near the Texas border. It consisted of singing and of ingesting peyote during the night. In the daytime women attendants, who stayed outside the confines of the ceremony site, supplied each man with water, and only a token of ritual food was consumed each day.

Saturday, September 12, 1964

During the first night of the ceremony, Thursday, September 3, I took eight peyote buttons. They had no effect on me, or if they did, it was a very slight one. I kept my eyes closed most of the night. I felt much better that way. I did not fall asleep, nor was I tired. At the very end of the session the singing became extraordinary. For a brief moment I felt uplifted and wanted to weep, but as the song ended the feeling vanished.

We all got up and went outside. The women gave us water. Some of the men gargled it; others drank it. The men did not talk at all, but the women chatted and giggled all day long. The ritual food was served at midday. It was cooked corn.

At sundown on Friday, September 4, the second session began. The leader sang his peyote song, and the cycle of songs and intake of peyote buttons began once again. It ended in the morning with each man singing his own song, in unison with the others.

When I went out I did not see as many women as had been there the day before. Someone gave me water, but I was no longer concerned with my surroundings. I had ingested eight buttons again, but the effect had been different.

It must have been toward the end of the session that the singing was greatly accelerated, with everybody singing at once. I perceived that something or somebody outside the house wanted to come in. I couldn't

tell whether the singing was done to prevent "it" from bursting in, or to lure it inside.

I was the only who did not have a song. They all seemed to look at me questioningly, especially the young men. I grew embarrassed and closed my eyes.

Then I realized I could perceive what was going on much better if I kept my eyes closed. This idea held my undivided attention. I closed my eyes, and saw the men in front of me. I opened my eyes, and the image was unchanged. The surroundings were exactly the same for me, whether my eyes were open or closed.

Suddenly everything vanished, or crumbled, and there emerged in its place the manlike figure of Mescalito I had seen two years before. He was sitting some distance away with his profile toward me. I stared fixedly at him, but he did not look at me; not once did he turn.

I believed I was doing something wrong, something that kept him away. I got up and walked toward him to ask him about it. But the act of moving dispelled the image. It began to fade, and the figures of the men I was with were superimposed upon it. Again I heard the loud, frantic singing.

I went into the nearby bushes and walked for a while. Everything stood out very clearly. I noticed I was seeing in the darkness, but it mattered very little this time. The important point was, why did Mescalito avoid me?

I returned to join the group, and as I was about to enter the house I heard a heavy rumbling and felt a tremor. The ground shook. It was the same noise I had heard in the peyote valley two years before.

I ran into the bushes again. I knew that Mescalito was there, and that I was going to find him. But he was not there. I waited until morning, and joined the others just before the session ended.

The usual procedure was repeated on the third day. I was not tired, but I slept during the afternoon.

In the evening of Saturday, September 5, the old man sang his peyote song to start the cycle once more. During this session I chewed only one button and did not listen to any of the songs, nor did I pay attention to anything that went on. From the first moment my whole being was uniquely concentrated on one point. I knew something terribly important for my well-being was missing.

While the men sang I asked Mescalito, in a loud voice, to teach me a song. My pleading mingled with the men's loud singing. Immediately I heard a song in my ears. I turned around and sat with my back to the group and listened. I heard the words and the tune over and over, and I

repeated them until I had learned the whole song. It was a long song in Spanish. Then I sang it to the group several times. And soon afterward a new song came to my ears. By morning I had sung both songs countless times. I felt I had been renewed, fortified.

After the water was given to us, don Juan gave me a bag, and we all went into the hills. It was a long, strenuous walk to a low mesa. There I saw several peyote plants. But for some reason I did not want to look at them. After we had crossed the mesa, the group broke up. Don Juan and I walked back, collecting peyote buttons just as we had done the first time I helped him.

We returned in the late afternoon of Sunday, September 6. In the evening the leader opened the cycle again. Nobody had said a word but I knew perfectly well it was the last gathering. This time the old man sang a new song. A sack with fresh peyote buttons was passed around. This was the first time I had tasted a fresh button. It was pulpy but hard to chew. It resembled a hard, green fruit, and was sharper and more bitter than the dried buttons. Personally, I found the fresh peyote infinitely more alive.

I chewed fourteen buttons. I counted them carefully. I did not finish the last one, for I heard the familiar rumble that marked the presence of Mescalito. Everybody sang frantically, and I knew that don Juan, and everybody else, had actually heard the noise. I refused to think that their reaction was a response to a cue given by one of them merely to deceive me.

At that moment I felt a great surge of wisdom engulfing me. A conjecture I had played with for three years turned then into a certainty. It had taken me three years to realize, or rather to find out, that whatever is contained in the cactus *Lophophora williamsii* had nothing to do with me in order to exist as an entity; it existed by itself out there, at large. I knew it then.

I sang feverishly until I could no longer voice the words. I felt as if my songs were inside my body, shaking me uncontrollably. I needed to go out and find Mescalito, or I would explode. I walked toward the peyote field. I kept on singing my songs. I knew they were individually mine—the unquestionable proof of my singleness. I sensed each one of my steps. They resounded on the ground; their echo produced the indescribable euphoria of being a man.

Each one of the peyote plants on the field shone with a bluish, scintillating light. One plant had a very bright light. I sat in front of it and sang my songs to it. As I sang Mescalito came out of the plant—the same manlike figure I had seen before. He looked at me. With great

audacity, for a person of my temperament, I sang to him. There was a sound of flutes, or of wind, a familiar musical vibration. He seemed to have said, as he had two years before, "What do you want?"

I spoke very loudly. I said that I knew there was something amiss in my life and in my actions, but I could not find out what it was. I begged him to tell me what was wrong with me, and also to tell me his name so that I could call him when I needed him. He looked at me, elongated his mouth like a trumpet until it reached my ear, and then told me his name.

Suddenly I saw my own father standing in the middle of the peyote field; but the field had vanished and the scene was my old home, the home of my childhood. My father and I were standing by a fig tree. I embraced my father and hurriedly began to tell him things I had never before been able to say. Every one of my thoughts was concise and to the point. It was as if we had no time, really, and I had to say everything at once. I said staggering things about my feelings toward him, things I would never have been able to voice under ordinary circumstances.

My father did not speak. He just listened and then was pulled, or sucked, away. I was alone again. I wept with remorse and sadness.

I walked through the peyote field calling the name Mescalito had taught me. Something emerged from a strange, starlike light on a peyote plant. It was a long shiny object—a stick of light the size of a man. For a moment it illuminated the whole field with an intense yellowish or amber light; then it lit up the whole sky above, creating a portentous, marvelous sight. I thought I would go blind if I kept on looking; I covered my eyes and buried my head in my arms.

I had a clear notion that Mescalito told me to eat one more peyote button. I thought, "I can't do that because I have no knife to cut it."

"Eat one from the ground," he said to me in the same strange way.

I lay on my stomach and chewed the top of a plant. It kindled me. It filled every corner of my body with warmth and directness. Everything was alive. Everything had exquisite and intricate detail, and yet everything was so simple. I was everywhere; I could see up and down and around, all at the same time.

This particular feeling lasted long enough for me to become aware of it. Then it changed into an oppressive terror, terror that did not come upon me abruptly, but somehow swiftly. At first my marvelous world of silence was jolted by sharp noises, but I was not concerned. Then the noises became louder and were uninterrupted, as if they were closing in on me. And gradually I lost the feeling of floating in a world undifferentiated, indifferent, and beautiful. The noises became gigantic steps. Something enormous was breathing and moving around me. I believed it was hunting for me.

I ran and hid under a boulder, and tried to determine from there what was following me. At one moment I crept out of my hiding place to look, and whoever was my pursuer came upon me. It was like sea kelp. It threw itself on me. I thought its weight was going to crush me, but I found myself inside a pipe or a cavity. I clearly saw that the kelp had not covered all the ground surface around me. There remained a bit of free ground underneath the boulder. I began to crawl underneath it. I saw huge drops of liquid falling from the kelp. I "knew" it was secreting digestive acid in order to dissolve me. A drop fell on my arm; I tried to rub off the acid with dirt, and applied saliva to it as I kept on digging. At one point I was almost vaporous. I was being pushed up toward a light. I thought the kelp had dissolved me. I vaguely detected a light which grew brighter; it was pushing from under the ground until finally it erupted into what I recognized as the sun coming out from behind the mountains.

Slowly I began to regain my usual sensorial processes. I lay on my stomach with my chin on my folded arm. The peyote plant in front of me began to light up again, and before I could move my eyes the long light emerged again. It hovered over me. I sat up. The light touched my whole body with quiet strength, and then rolled away out of sight.

I ran all the way to the place where the other men were. We all returned to town. Don Juan and I stayed one more day with don Roberto, the peyote leader. I slept all the time we were there. When we were about to leave, the young men who had taken part in the peyote sessions came up to me. They embraced me one by one, and laughed shyly. Each one of them introduced himself. I talked with them for hours about everything except the peyote meetings.

Don Juan said it was time to leave. The young men embraced me again. "Come back," one of them said. "We are already waiting for you," another one added. I drove away slowly trying to see the older men, but none of them was there.

Thursday, September 10, 1964

To tell don Juan about an experience always forced me to recall it step by step, to the best of my ability. This seemed to be the only way to remember everything.

Today I told him the details of my last encounter with Mescalito. He listened to my story attentively up to the point when Mescalito told me his name. Don Juan interrupted me there.

"You are on your own now," he said. "The protector has accepted you. I will be of very little help to you from now on. You don't have to tell me anything more about your relationship with him. You know his

name now; and neither his name, nor his dealings with you, should ever be mentioned to a living being."

I insisted that I wanted to tell him all the details of the experience, because it made no sense to me. I told him I needed his assistance to interpret what I had seen. He said I could do that by myself, that it was better for me to start thinking on my own. I argued that I was interested in hearing his opinions because it would take me too long to arrive at my own, and I did not know how to proceed.

I said, "Take the songs for instance. What do they mean?"

"Only you can decide that," he said. "How could I know what they mean? The protector alone can tell you that, just as he alone can teach you his songs. If I were to tell you what they mean, it would be the same as if you learned someone else's songs."

"What do you mean by that, don Juan?"

"You can tell who are the phonies by listening to people singing the protector's songs. Only the songs with soul are his and were taught by him. The others are copies of other men's songs. People are sometimes as deceitful as that. They sing someone else's songs without even knowing what the songs say."

I said that I had meant to ask for what purpose the songs were used. He answered that the songs I had learned were for calling the protector, and that I should always use them in conjunction with his name to call him. Later Mescalito would probably teach me other songs for other purposes, don Juan said.

I asked him then if he thought the protector had accepted me fully. He laughed as if my question were foolish. He said the protector had accepted me and had made sure I knew that he had accepted me by showing himself to me as a light, twice. Don Juan seemed to be very impressed by the fact that I had seen the light twice. He emphasized that aspect of my encounter with Mescalito.

I told him I could not understand how it was possible to be accepted by the protector, yet terrified by him at the same time.

He did not answer for a very long time. He seemed bewildered. Finally he said, "It is so clear. What he wanted is so clear that I don't see how you can misunderstand."

"Everything is still incomprehensible to me, don Juan."

"It takes time really to see and understand what Mescalito means; you should think about his lessons until they become clear."

Friday, September 11, 1964

Again I insisted upon having don Juan interpret my visionary experiences. He stalled for a while. Then he spoke as if we had already been carrying on a conversation about Mescalito.

"Do you see how stupid it is to ask if he is like a person you can talk to?" don Juan said. "He is like nothing you have ever seen. He is like a man, but at the same time he is not at all like one. It is difficult to explain that to people who know nothing about him and want to know everything about him all at once. And then, his lessons are as mysterious as he is himself. No man, to my knowledge, can predict his acts. You ask him a question and he shows you the way, but he does not tell you about it in the same manner you and I talk to each other. Do you understand now what he does?"

"I don't think I have trouble understanding that. What I can't figure out is his meaning."

"You asked him to tell you what's wrong with you, and he gave you the full picture. There can be no mistake! You can't claim you did not understand. It was not conversation—and yet it was. Then you asked him another question, and he answered you in exactly the same manner. As to what he meant, I am not sure I understand it, because you chose not to tell me what your question was."

I repeated very carefully the questions I remembered having asked; I put them in the order in which I had voiced them: "Am I doing the right thing? Am I on the right path? What should I do with my life?" Don Juan said the questions I had asked were only words; it was better not to voice the questions, but to ask them from within. He told me the protector meant to give me a lesson; and to prove that he meant to give me a lesson and not to scare me away, he showed himself as a light twice.

I said I still could not understand why Mescalito terrorized me if he had accepted me. I reminded don Juan that, according to his statements, to be accepted by Mescalito implied that his form was constant and did not shift from bliss to nightmare. Don Juan laughed at me again and said that if I would think about the question I had had in my heart when I talked to Mescalito, then I myself would understand the lesson.

To think about the question I had had in my "heart" was a difficult problem. I told don Juan I had had many things in mind. When I asked if I was on the right path, I meant: Do I have one foot in each of two worlds? Which world is the right one? What course should my life take?

Don Juan listened to my explanations and concluded that I did not have a clear view of the world, and that the protector had given me a beautifully clear lesson.

He said, "You think there are two worlds for you—two paths. But there is only one. The protector showed you this with unbelievable clarity. The only world available to you is the world of men, and that world you cannot choose to leave. You are a man! The protector showed you the world of happiness where there is no difference between things

because there is no one there to ask about the difference. But that is not the world of men. The protector shook you out of it and showed you how a man thinks and fights. *That* is the world of man! And to be a man is to be condemned to that world. You have the vanity to believe you live in two worlds, but that is only your vanity. There is but one single world for us. We are men, and must follow the world of men contentedly.

"I believe that was the lesson."

9

Don Juan seemed to want me to work with the devil's weed as much as possible. This stand was incongruous with his alleged dislike of the power. He explained himself by saying that the time when I had to smoke again was near, and by then I ought to have developed a better knowledge of the power of the devil's weed.

He suggested repeatedly that I should at least test the devil's weed with one more sorcery with the lizards. I played with the idea for a long time. Don Juan's urgency increased dramatically until I felt obliged to heed his demand. And one day I made up my mind to divine about some stolen objects.

Monday, December 28, 1964

On Saturday, December 19, I cut the *Datura* root. I waited until it was fairly dark to do my dancing around the plant. I prepared the root extract during the night and on Sunday, about 6:00 A.M., I went to the site of my *Datura*. I sat in front of the plant. I had taken careful notes on don Juan's teachings about the procedure. I read my notes again, and realized I did not have to grind the seeds there. Somehow just being in front of the plant gave me a rare kind of emotional stability, a clarity of thought or a power to concentrate on my actions which I ordinarily lacked.

I followed all the instructions meticulously, calculating my time so that the paste and the root were ready by late afternoon. About five o'clock I was busy trying to catch a pair of lizards. For an hour and a half I tried every method I could think of, but I failed in every attempt.

I was sitting in front of the *Datura* plant trying to figure out an expedient way of accomplishing my purpose when I suddenly remembered that don Juan had said the lizards had to be talked to. At first I felt ludicrous talking to the lizards. It was like being embarrassed by talking in front of an audience. The feeling soon vanished and I went on talking. It was almost dark. I lifted a rock. A lizard was under it. It had the appearance of being numb. I picked it up. And then I saw that there was another stiff lizard under another rock. They did not even wriggle.

The sewing of the mouth and eyes was the most difficult task. I

noticed that don Juan had imparted a sense of irrevocability to my acts. His stand was that when a man begins an act there is no way to stop. If I had wanted to stop, however, there was nothing to prevent me. Perhaps I did not want to stop.

I set one lizard free and it went in a northeasterly direction—the omen of a good, but difficult, experience. I tied the other lizard to my shoulder and smeared my temples as prescribed. The lizard was stiff; for a moment I thought it had died, and don Juan had never told me what to do if that happened. But the lizard was only numb.

I drank the potion and waited awhile. I felt nothing out of the ordinary. I began rubbing the paste on my temples. I applied it twenty-five times. Then quite mechanically, as if I were absent-minded, I spread it repeatedly all over my forehead. I realized my mistake and hurriedly wiped the paste off. My forehead was sweaty; I became feverish. Intense anxiety gripped me, for don Juan had strongly advised me not to rub the paste on my forehead. The fear changed into a feeling of absolute loneliness, a feeling of being doomed. I was there by myself. If something harmful was going to happen to me, there was no one there to help me. I wanted to run away. I had an alarming sensation of indecision, of not knowing what to do. A flood of thoughts rushed into my mind, flashing with extraordinary speed. I noticed that they were rather strange thoughts; that is, they were strange in the sense that they seemed to come in a different way from ordinary thoughts. I am familiar with the way I think. My thoughts have a definite order that is my own, and any deviation is noticeable.

One of the alien thoughts was about a statement made by an author. It was, I vaguely remember, more like a voice, or something said somewhere in the background. It happened so fast that it startled me. I paused to consider it, but it changed into an ordinary thought. I was certain I had read the statement, but I could not think of the author's name. I suddenly remembered that it was Alfred Kroeber. Then another alien thought popped up and "said" that it was not Kroeber, but Georg Simmel, who had made the statement. I insisted that it was Kroeber, and the next thing I knew I was in the midst of an argument with myself. And had forgotten about my feeling of being doomed.

My eyelids were heavy, as though I had taken sleeping pills. Although I have never taken any, it was the image that came to my mind. I was falling asleep. I wanted to go to my car and crawl in, but I couldn't move.

Then, quite suddenly, I woke up, or rather, I clearly felt that I had. My first thought was about the time of day. I looked around. I was not in front of the *Datura* plant. Nonchalantly I accepted the fact that I was

undergoing another divinatory experience. It was 12:35 by a clock above my head. I knew it was afternoon.

I saw a young man carrying a stack of papers. I was nearly touching him. I saw the veins of his neck pulsating and heard the fast beating of his heart. I had become absorbed in what I was seeing and had not been aware, so far, of the quality of my thoughts. Then I heard a "voice" in my ear describing the scene, and I realized that the "voice" was the alien thought in my mind.

I became so engrossed in listening that the scene lost its visual interest for me. I heard the voice at my right ear above my shoulder. It actually created the scene by describing it. But it obeyed my will, because I could stop it at any time and examine the details of what it said at my leisure. I "heard-saw" the entire sequence of the young man's actions. The voice went on explaining them in minute detail, but somehow the action was not important. The little voice was the extraordinary issue. Three times during the course of the experience I tried to turn around to see who was talking. I tried to turn my head all the way to the right, or just whirl around unexpectedly to see if somebody was there. But every time I did it, my vision became blurry. I thought: "The reason I cannot turn around is because the scene is not in the realm of ordinary reality." And that thought was my own.

From then on I concentrated my attention on the voice alone. It seemed to come from my shoulder. It was perfectly clear, although it was a small voice. It was, however, not a child's voice or a falsetto voice, but a miniature man's voice. It wasn't my voice either. I presumed it was English that I heard. Whenever I tried deliberately to trap the voice, it subsided altogether or became vague and the scene faded. I thought of a simile. The voice was like the image created by dust particles in the eyelashes, or the blood vessels in the cornea of the eye, a wormlike shape that can be seen as long as one is not looking at it directly; but the moment one tries to look at it, it shifts out of sight with the movement of the eyeball.

I became totally disinterested in the action. As I listened the voice became more complex. What I thought to be a voice was more like something whispering thoughts into my ear. But that was not accurate. Something was *thinking* for me. The thoughts were outside myself. I knew that was so, because I could hold my own thoughts and the thoughts of the "other" at the same time.

At one point the voice created scenes acted out by the young man, which had nothing to do with my original question about the lost objects. The young man performed very complex acts. The action had become important again and I paid no more attention to the voice. I began to

lose patience; I wanted to stop. "How can I end this?" I thought. The voice in my ear said I should go back to the canyon. I asked how, and the voice answered that I should think of my plant.

I thought of my plant. Usually I sat in front of it. I had done it so many times that it was quite easy for me to visualize it. I believed that seeing it, as I did at that moment, was another hallucination, but the voice said I was "back"! I strained to listen. There was only silence. The *Datura* plant in front of me seemed as real as everything else I had seen, but I could touch it, I could move around.

I stood up and walked toward my car. The effort exhausted me, and I sat down and closed my eyes. I felt dizzy and wanted to vomit. There was a buzzing in my ears.

Something slid on my chest. It was the lizard. I remembered don Juan's admonition about setting it free. I went back to the plant and untied the lizard. I did not want to see whether it was dead or alive. I broke the clay pot with the paste and kicked some dirt over it. I got into my car and fell asleep.

Thursday, December 24, 1964

Today I narrated the whole experience to don Juan. As usual, he listened without interrupting me. At the end we had the following dialogue.

"You did something very wrong."

"I know it. It was a very stupid error, an accident."

"There are no accidents when you deal with the devil's weed. I told you she would test you all the way. As I see it, either you are very strong or the weed really likes you. The center of the forehead is only for the great brujos who know how to handle her power."

"What usually happens when a man rubs his forehead with the paste, don Juan?"

"If the man is not a great brujo he will never come back from the journey."

"Have you ever rubbed the paste on your forehead, don Juan?"

"Never! My benefactor told me very few people return from such a journey. A man could be gone for months, and would have to be tended by others. My benefactor said the lizards could take a man to the end of the world and show him the most marvelous secrets upon request."

"Do you know anybody who has ever taken that journey?"

"Yes, my benefactor. But he never taught me how to return."

"Is it so very difficult to return, don Juan?"

"Yes. That is why your act is truly astonishing to me. You had no steps to follow, and we must follow certain steps, because it is in the steps where man finds strength. Without them we are nothing."

We remained silent for hours. He seemed to be immersed in very deep deliberation.

Saturday, December 26, 1964

Don Juan asked me if I had looked for the lizards. I told him I had, but that I couldn't find them. I asked him what would have happened if one of the lizards had died while I was holding it. He said the death of a lizard would be an unfortunate event. If the lizard with the sewed-up mouth had died at any time there would have been no sense in pursuing the sorcery, he said. It would also have meant that the lizards had withdrawn their friendship, and I would have had to give up learning about the devil's weed for a long time.

"How long, don Juan?" I asked.

"Two years or more."

"What would have happened if the other lizard had died?"

"If the second lizard had died, you would have been in real danger. You would have been alone, without a guide. If she died before you started the sorcery, you could have stopped it; but if you had stopped it, you would also have to give up the devil's weed for good. If the lizard had died while she was on your shoulder, after you had begun the sorcery, you would have had to go ahead with it, and that would truly have been madness."

"Why would it have been madness?"

"Because under such conditions nothing makes sense. You are alone without a guide, seeing terrifying, nonsensical things."

"What do you mean by 'nonsensical things'?"

"Things we see by ourselves. Things we see when we have no direction. It means the devils' weed is trying to get rid of you, finally pushing you away."

"Do you know anyone who ever experienced that?"

"Yes. *I* did. Without the wisdom of the lizards I went mad."

"What did you see, don Juan?"

"A bunch of nonsense. What else could I have seen without direction?"

Monday, December 28, 1964

"You told me, don Juan, that the devil's weed tests men. What did you mean by that?"

"The devil's weed is like a woman, and like a woman she flatters men. She sets traps for them at every turn. She did it to you when she forced you to rub the paste on your forehead. She will try it again, and you will probably fall for it. I warn you against it. Don't take her with passion; the devil's weed is only one path to the secrets of a man of

knowledge. There are other paths. But her trap is to make you believe that hers is the only way. I say it is useless to waste your life on one path, especially if that path has no heart."

"But how do you know when a path has no heart, don Juan?"

"Before you embark on it you ask the question: Does this path have a heart? If the answer is no, you will know it, and then you must choose another path."

"But how will I know for sure whether a path has a heart or not?"

"Anybody would know that. The trouble is nobody asks the question; and when a man finally realizes that he has taken a path without a heart, the path is ready to kill him. At that point very few men can stop to deliberate, and leave the path."

"How should I proceed to ask the question properly, don Juan?"

"Just ask it."

"I mean, is there a proper method, so I would not lie to myself and believe the answer is yes when it really is no?"

"Why would you lie?"

"Perhaps because at the moment the path is pleasant and enjoyable."

"That is nonsense. A path without a heart is never enjoyable. You have to work hard even to take it. On the other hand, a path with heart is easy; it does not make you work at liking it."

Don Juan suddenly changed the direction of the conversation and bluntly confronted me with the idea that I liked the devil's weed. I had to admit that I had at least a preference for it. He asked me how I felt about his ally, the smoke, and I had to tell him that just the idea of it frightened me out of my senses.

"I have told you that to choose a path you must be free from fear and ambition. But the smoke blinds you with fear, and the devil's weed blinds you with ambition."

I argued that one needs ambition even to embark on any path, and that his statement that one had to be free from ambition did not make sense. A person has to have ambition in order to learn.

"The desire to learn is not ambition," he said. "It is our lot as men to want to know, but to seek the devil's weed is to bid for power, and that is ambition, because you are not bidding to know. Don't let the devil's weed blind you. She has hooked you already. She entices men and gives them a sense of power; she makes them feel they can do things that no ordinary man can. But that is her trap. And, the next thing, the path without a heart will turn against men and destroy them. It does not take much to die, and to seek death is to seek nothing."

10

In the month of December, 1964, don Juan and I went to collect the different plants needed to make the smoking mixture. It was the fourth cycle. Don Juan merely supervised my actions. He urged me to take time, to watch, and to deliberate before I picked any of the plants. As soon as the ingredients had been gathered and stored, he prompted me to meet with his ally again.

Thursday, December 31, 1964

"Now that you know a bit more about the devil's weed and the smoke, you can tell more clearly which of the two you like better," don Juan said.

"The smoke really terrifies me, don Juan. I don't know exactly why, but I don't have a good feeling about it."

"You like flattery, and the devil's weed flatters you. Like a woman, she makes you feel good. The smoke, on the other hand, is the most noble power; he has the purest heart. He does not entice men or make them prisoners, nor does he love or hate. All he requires is strength. The devil's weed also requires strength, but of a different kind. It is closer to being virile with women. On the other hand, the strength required by the smoke is strength of the heart. You don't have that! But very few men have it. That is why I recommend that you learn more about the smoke. He reinforces the heart. He is not like the devil's weed, full of passions, jealousies, and violence. The smoke is constant. You don't have to worry about forgetting something along the line."

Wednesday, January 27, 1965

On Tuesday, January 19, I smoked again the hallucinogenic mixture. I had told don Juan I felt very apprehensive about the smoke, and that it frightened me. He said I had to try it again to evaluate it with justice.

We walked into his room. It was almost two o'clock in the afternoon. He brought out the pipe. I got the charcoals, then we sat facing each other. He said he was going to warm up the pipe and awaken her, and if I watched carefully I would see how she glowed. He put the pipe

to his lips three or four times, and sucked through it. He rubbed it tenderly. Suddenly he nodded, almost imperceptibly, to signal me to look at the pipe's awakening. I looked, but I couldn't see it.

He handed the pipe to me. I filled the bowl with my own mixture, and then picked a burning charcoal with a pair of tweezers I had made from a wooden clothespin and had been saving for this occasion. Don Juan looked at my tweezers and began to laugh. I vacillated for a moment, and the charcoal stuck to the tweezers. I was afraid to tap them against the pipe bowl, and I had to spit on the charcoal to put it out.

Don Juan turned his head away and covered his face with his arm. His body shook. For a moment I thought he was crying, but he was laughing silently.

The action was interrupted for a long time; then he swiftly picked up a charcoal himself, put it in the bowl, and ordered me to smoke. It required quite an effort to suck through the mixture; it seemed to be very compact. After the first try I felt I had sucked the fine powder into my mouth. It numbed my mouth immediately. I saw the glow in the bowl, but I never felt the smoke as the smoke of a cigarette is felt. Yet I had the sensation of inhaling something, something that filled my lungs first and then pushed itself down to fill the rest of my body.

I counted twenty inhalations, and then the count did not matter any longer. I began to sweat; don Juan looked at me fixedly and told me not to be afraid and to do exactly as he said. I tried to say "alright," but instead I made a weird, howling sound. It went on resounding after I had closed my mouth. The sound startled don Juan, who had another attack of laughter. I wanted to say "yes" with my head, but I couldn't move.

Don Juan opened my hands gently and took the pipe away. He ordered me to lie down on the floor, but not to fall asleep. I wondered if he was going to help me lie down but he did not. He just stared at me uninterruptedly. All of a sudden I saw the room tumbling, and I was looking at don Juan from a position on my side. From that point on the images became strangely blurry, as in a dream. I can vaguely recall hearing don Juan talk to me a great deal during the time I was immobilized.

I did not experience fear, or unpleasantness, during the state itself, nor was I sick upon awakening the next day. The only thing out of the ordinary was that I could not think clearly for some time after waking up. Then gradually, in a period of four or five hours, I became myself again.

Wednesday, January 20, 1965

Don Juan did not talk about my experience, nor did he ask me to relate it to him. His sole comment was that I had fallen asleep too soon.

"The only way to stay awake is to become a bird, or a cricket, or something of the sort," he said.

"How do you do that, don Juan?"

"That is what I am teaching you. Do you remember what I said to you yesterday while you were without your body?"

"I can't recall clearly."

"I am a crow. I am teaching you how to become a crow. When you learn that, you will stay awake, and you will move freely; otherwise you will always be glued to the ground, wherever you fall."

Sunday, February 7, 1965

My second attempt with the smoke took place about midday on Sunday, January 31. I woke up the following day in the early evening. I had the sensation of possessing an unusual power to recollect whatever don Juan had said to me during the experience. His words were imprinted on my mind. I kept on hearing them with extraordinary clarity and persistence. During this attempt another fact became obvious to me: my entire body had become numb soon after I began to swallow the fine powder, which got into my mouth every time I sucked the pipe. Thus I not only inhaled the smoke, but also ingested the mixture.

I tried to narrate my experience to don Juan; he said I had done nothing important. I mentioned that I could remember everything that had happened, but he did not want to hear about it. Every memory was precise and unmistakable. The smoking procedure had been the same as in the previous attempt. It was almost as if the two experiences were perfectly juxtaposable, and I could start my recollection from the time the first experience ended. I clearly remembered that from the time I fell to the ground on my side I was completely devoid of feeling or thought. Yet my clarity was not impaired in any way. I remember thinking my last thought at about the time the room became a vertical plane: "I must have clunked my head on the floor, yet I don't feel any pain."

From that point on I could only see and hear. I could repeat every word don Juan had said. I followed each one of his directions. They seemed clear, logical, and easy. He said that my body was disappearing and only my head was going to remain, and in such a condition the only way to stay awake and move around was by becoming a crow. He commanded me to make an effort to wink, adding that whenever I was capable of winking I would be ready to proceed. Then he told me that my body had vanished completely and all I had was my head; he said the head never disappears because the head is what turns into a crow.

He ordered me to wink. He must have repeated this command, and all his other commands countless times, because I could remember all of them with extraordinary clarity. I must have winked, because he said I

was ready and ordered me to straighten up my head and put it on my chin. He said that in the chin were the crow's legs. He commanded me to feel the legs and observe that they were coming out slowly. He then said that I was not solid yet, that I had to grow a tail, and that the tail would come out of my neck. He ordered me to extend the tail like a fan, and to feel how it swept the floor.

Then he talked about the crow's wings, and said they would come out of my cheekbones. He said it was hard and painful. He commanded me to unfold them. He said they had to be extremely long, as long as I could stretch them, otherwise I would not be able to fly. He told me the wings were coming out and were long and beautiful, and that I had to flap them until they were real wings.

He talked about the top of my head next and said it was still very large and heavy, and its bulk would prevent my flying. He told me that the way to reduce its size was by winking; with every wink my head would become smaller. He ordered me to wink until the top weight was gone and I could jump freely. Then he told me I had reduced my head to the size of a crow, and that I had to walk around and hop until I had lost my stiffness.

There was one last thing I had to change, he said, before I could fly. It was the most difficult change, and to accomplish it I had to be docile and do exactly as he told me. I had to learn to see like a crow. He said that my mouth and nose were going to grow between my eyes until I had a strong beak. He said that crows see straight to the side, and commanded me to turn my head and look at him with one eye. He said that if I wanted to change and look with the other eye I had to shake my beak down, and that that movement would make me look through the other eye. He ordered me to shift from one eye to the other. And then he said I was ready to fly, and that the only way to fly was to have him toss me into the air.

I had no difficulty whatsoever eliciting the corresponding sensation to each one of his commands. I had the perception of growing bird's legs, which were weak and wobbly at first. I felt a tail coming out of the back of my neck and wings out of my cheekbones. The wings were folded deeply. I felt them coming out by degrees. The process was hard but not painful. Then I winked my head down to the size of a crow. But the most astonishing effect was accomplished with my eyes. My bird's sight!

When don Juan directed me to grow a beak, I had an annoying sensation of lack of air. Then something bulged out and created a block in front of me. But it was not until don Juan directed me to see laterally that my eyes actually were capable of having a full view to the side. I

could wink one eye at a time and shift the focusing from one eye to the other. But the sight of the room and all the things in it was not like an ordinary sight. Yet it was impossible to tell in what way it was different. Perhaps it was lopsided, or perhaps things were out of focus. Don Juan became very big and glowy. Something about him was comforting and safe. Then the images blurred; they lost their outlines, and became sharp abstract patterns that flickered for a while.

Sunday, March 28, 1965

On Thursday, March 18, I smoked again the hallucinogenic mixture. The initial procedure was different in small details. I had to refill the pipe bowl once. After I had finished the first batch, don Juan directed me to clean the bowl, but he poured the mixture into the bowl himself because I lacked muscular coordination. It took a great deal of effort to move my arms. There was enough mixture in my bag for one refill. Don Juan looked at the bag and said this was my last attempt with the smoke until the next year because I had used up all my provisions.

He turned the little bag inside out and shook the dust into the dish that held the charcoals. It burned with an orange glow, as if he had placed a sheet of transparent material over the charcoals. The sheet burst into flame, and then it cracked into an intricate pattern of lines. Something zigzagged inside the lines at high speed. Don Juan told me to look at the movement in the lines. I saw something that looked like a small marble rolling back and forth in the glowing area. He leaned over, put his hand into the glow, picked out the marble, and placed it in the pipe bowl. He ordered me to take a puff. I had a clear impression that he had put the small ball into the pipe so that I would inhale it. In a moment the room lost its horizontal position. I felt a profound numbness, a sensation of heaviness.

When I awakened, I was lying on my back at the bottom of a shallow irrigation ditch, immersed in water up to my chin. Someone was holding my head up. It was don Juan. The first thought I had was that the water in the channel had an unusual quality; it was cold and heavy. It slapped lightly against me, and my thoughts cleared with every movement it made. At first the water had a bright green halo, or fluorescence, which soon dissolved, leaving only a stream of ordinary water.

I asked don Juan about the time of day. He said it was early morning. After awhile I was completely awake, and got out of the water.

"You must tell me all you saw," don Juan said when we got to his house. He also said he had been trying to "bring me back" for three days, and had had a very difficult time doing it. I made numerous

attempts to describe what I had seen, but I could not concentrate. Later on, during the early evening, I felt I was ready to talk with don Juan, and I began to tell him what I remembered from the time I had fallen on my side, but he did not want to hear about it. He said the only interesting part was what I saw and did after he "tossed me into the air and I flew away."

All I could remember was a series of dreamlike images or scenes. They had no sequential order. I had the impression that each one of them was like an isolated bubble, floating into focus and then moving away. They were not, however, merely scenes to look at. I was inside them. I took part in them. When I tried to recollect them at first, I had the sensation that they were vague, diffused flashes, but as I thought about them I realized that each one of them was extremely clear although totally unrelated to ordinary seeing—hence, the sensation of vagueness. The images were few and simple.

As soon as don Juan mentioned that he had "tossed me into the air" I had a faint recollection of an absolutely clear scene in which I was looking straight at him from some distance away. I was looking at his face only. It was monumental in size. It was flat and had an intense glow. His hair was yellowish, and it moved. Each part of his face moved by itself, projecting a sort of amber light.

The next image was one in which don Juan had actually tossed me up, or hurled me, in a straight onward direction. I remember I "extended my wings and flew." I felt alone, cutting through the air, painfully moving straight ahead. It was more like walking than like flying. It tired my body. There was no feeling of flowing free, no exuberance.

Then I remembered an instant in which I was motionless, looking at a mass of sharp, dark edges set in an area that had a dull, painful light; next I saw a field with an infinite variety of lights. The lights moved and flickered and changed their luminosity. They were almost like colors. Their intensity dazzled me.

At another moment, an object was almost against my eye. It was a thick, pointed object; it had a definite pinkish glow. I felt a sudden tremor somewhere in my body and saw a multitude of similar pink forms coming toward me. They all moved on me. I jumped away.

The last scene I remembered was three silvery birds. They radiated a shiny, metallic light, almost like stainless steel, but intense and moving and alive. I liked them. We flew together.

Don Juan did not make any comments on my recounting.

Tuesday, March 23, 1965

The following conversation took place the next day, after the recounting of my experience.

Don Juan said: "It does not take much to become a crow. You did it and now you will always be one."

"What happened after I became a crow, don Juan? Did I fly for three days?"

"No, you came back at nightfall as I had told you to."

"But how did I come back?"

"You were very tired and went to sleep. That is all."

"I mean did I fly back?"

"I have already told you. You obeyed me and came back to the house. But don't concern yourself with that matter. It is of no importance."

"What is important, then?"

"In your whole trip there was only one thing of great value—the silvery birds!"

"What was so special about them? They were just birds."

"Not just birds—they were crows."

"Were they white crows, don Juan?"

"The black feathers of a crow are really silvery. The crows shine so intensely that they are not bothered by other birds."

"Why did their feathers look silvery?"

"Because you were seeing as a crow sees. A bird that looks dark to us looks white to a crow. The white pigeons, for instance, are pink or bluish to a crow; sea gulls are yellow. Now, try to remember how you joined them."

I thought about it, but the birds were a dim, disassociated image which had no continuity. I told him I could remember only that I felt I had flown with them. He asked me whether I had joined them in the air or on the ground, but I could not possibly answer that. He became almost angry with me. He demanded that I think about it. He said: "All this will not mean a damn; it will be only a mad dream unless you remember correctly." I strained myself to recollect, but I could not.

Saturday, April 3, 1965

Today I thought of another image in my "dream" about the silvery birds. I remembered seeing a dark mass with myriads of pinholes. In fact, the mass was a dark cluster of little holes. I don't know why I thought it was soft. As I was looking at it, three birds flew straight at me. One of them made a noise; then all three of them were next to me on the ground.

I described the image to don Juan. He asked me from what direction the birds had come. I said I couldn't possibly determine that. He became quite impatient and accused me of being inflexible in my thinking. He said I could very well remember if I tried to, and that I was

afraid to let myself become less rigid. He said that I was thinking in terms of men and crows, and that I was neither a man nor a crow at the time that I wanted to recollect.

He asked me to remember what the crow had said to me. I tried to think about it, but my mind played on scores of other things instead. I couldn't concentrate.

Sunday, April 4, 1965

I took a long hike today. It got quite dark before I reached don Juan's house. I was thinking about the crows when suddenly a very strange "thought" crossed my mind. It was more like an impression or a feeling than a thought. The bird that had made the noise said they were coming from the north and were going south, and when we met again they would be coming the same way.

I told don Juan what I had thought up, or maybe remembered. He said, "Don't think about whether you remembered it or made it up. Such thoughts fit men only. They do not fit crows, especially those you saw, for they are the emissaries of your fate. You are already a crow. You will never change that. From now on the crows will tell you with their flight about every turn of your fate. In which direction did you fly with them?"

"I couldn't know that, don Juan!"

"If you think properly you will remember. Sit on the floor and tell me the position in which you were when the birds flew to you. Close your eyes and make a line on the floor."

I followed his suggestion and determined the point.

"Don't open your eyes yet!" He proceeded, "In which direction did you all fly in relation to that point?"

I made another mark on the ground.

Taking these points of orientation as a reference, don Juan interpreted the different patterns of flight the crows would observe to foretell my personal future or fate. He set up the four points of the compass as the axis of the crows' flight.

I asked him whether the crows always followed the cardinal points to tell a man's fate. He said that the orientation was mine alone; whatever the crows did in my first meeting with them was of crucial importance. He insisted on my recalling every detail, for the message and the pattern of the "emissaries" were an individual, personalized matter.

There was one more thing he insisted I should remember, and that was the time of day when the emissaries left me. He asked me to think of the difference in the light around me between the time when I "began to fly" and the time when the silvery birds "flew with me." When I first had

the sensation of painful flight, it was dark. But when I saw the birds, everything was reddish—light red, or perhaps orange.

He said: "That means it was late in the day; the sun was not down yet. When it is completely dark a crow is blind with whiteness and not with darkness, the way we are at night. This indication of the time places your last emissaries at the end of the day. They will call you, and as they fly above your head, they will become silvery white; you will see them shining against the sky, and it will mean your time is up. It will mean you are going to die and become a crow yourself."

"What if I see them during the morning?"

"You won't see them in the morning!"

"But crows fly all day."

"Not your emissaries, you fool!"

"How about *your* emissaries, don Juan?"

"Mine will come in the morning. There will also be three of them. My benefactor told me that one could shout them back to black if one does not want to die. But now I know it can't be done. My benefactor was given to shouting, and to all the clatter and violence of the devil's weed. I know the smoke is different because he has no passion. He is fair. When your silvery emissaries come for you, there is no need to shout at them. Just fly with them as you have already done. After they have collected you they will reverse directions, and there will be four of them flying away."

Saturday, April 10, 1965

I had been experiencing brief flashes of disassociation, or shallow states of nonordinary reality.

One element from the hallucinogenic experience with the mushrooms kept recurring in my thoughts: the soft, dark mass of pinholes. I continued to visualize it as a grease or an oil bubble which began to draw me to its center. It was almost as if the center would open up and swallow me, and for very brief moments I experienced something resembling a state of nonordinary reality. As a result I suffered moments of profound agitation, anxiety, and discomfort, and I willfully strove to end the experiences as soon as they began.

Today I discussed this condition with don Juan. I asked for advice. He seemed to be unconcerned and told me to disregard the experiences because they were meaningless, or rather valueless. He said the only experiences worth my effort and concern would be those in which I saw a crow; any other kind of "vision" would be merely the product of my fears. He reminded me again that in order to partake of the smoke it was necessary to lead a strong, quiet life. Personally I seemed to have

reached a dangerous threshold. I told him I felt I could not go on; there was something truly frightening about the mushrooms.

In going over the images I recalled from my hallucinogenic experience, I had come to the unavoidable conclusion that I had seen the world in a way that was structurally different from ordinary vision. In other states of nonordinary reality I had undergone, the forms and the patterns I had visualized were always within the confines of my visual conception of the world. But the sensation of seeing under the influence of the hallucinogenic smoke mixture was not the same. Everything I saw was in front of me in a direct line of vision; nothing was above or below that line of vision.

Every image had an irritating flatness, and yet, disconcertingly, a profound depth. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the images were a conglomerate of unbelievably sharp details set inside fields of different light; the light in the fields moved, creating an effect of rotation.

After probing and exerting myself to remember, I was forced to make a series of analogies or similes in order to "understand" what I had "seen." Don Juan's face, for instance, looked as if he had been submerged in water. The water seemed to move in a continuous flow over his face and hair. It so magnified them that I could see every pore in his skin or every hair on his head whenever I focused my vision. On the other hand, I saw masses of matter that were flat and full of edges, but did not move because there was no fluctuation in the light that came from them.

I asked don Juan what were the things that I had seen. He said that because this was the first time I was seeing as a crow the images were not clear or important, and that later on with practice I would be able to recognize everything.

I brought up the issue of the difference I had detected in the movement of light. "Things that are alive," he said, "move inside, and a crow can easily see when something is dead, or about to die, because the movement has stopped or is slowing down to a stop. A crow can also tell when something is moving too fast, and by the same token a crow can tell when something is moving just right."

"What does it mean when something is moving too fast, or just right?"

"It means a crow can actually tell what to avoid and what to seek. When something is moving too fast inside, it means it is about to explode violently, or to leap forward, and a crow will avoid it. When it moves inside just right, it is a pleasing sight and a crow will seek it."

"Do rocks move inside?"

"No, not rocks or dead animals or dead trees. But they are beautiful to look at. That is why crows hang around dead bodies. They like to look at them. No light moves inside them."

"But when the flesh rots, doesn't it change or move?"

"Yes, but that is a different movement. What a crow sees then is millions of things moving inside the flesh with a light of their own, and that is what a crow likes to see. It is truly an unforgettable sight."

"Have you seen it yourself, don Juan?"

"Anybody who learns to become a crow can see it. You will see it yourself."

At this point I asked don Juan the unavoidable question.

"Did I really become a crow? I mean would anyone seeing me have thought I was an ordinary crow?"

"No. You can't think that way when dealing with the power of the allies. Such questions make no sense, and yet to become a crow is the simplest of all matters. It is almost like frolicking; it has little usefulness. As I have already told you, the smoke is not for those who seek power. It is only for those who crave to see. I learned to become a crow because these birds are the most effective of all. No other birds bother them, except perhaps larger, hungry eagles, but crows fly in groups and can defend themselves. Men don't bother crows either, and that is an important point. Any man can distinguish a large eagle, especially an unusual eagle, or any other large, unusual bird, but who cares about a crow? A crow is safe. It is ideal in size and nature. It can go safely into any place without attracting attention. On the other hand, it is possible to become a lion or a bear, but that is rather dangerous. Such a creature is too large; it takes too much energy to become one. One can also become a cricket, or a lizard, or even an ant, but that is even more dangerous, because large animals prey on small creatures."

I argued that what he was saying meant that one really changed into a crow, or a cricket, or anything else. But he insisted I was misunderstanding.

"It takes a very long time to learn to be a proper crow," he said. "But you did not change, nor did you stop being a man. There is something else."

"Can you tell me what the something else is, don Juan?"

"Perhaps by now you know it yourself. Maybe if you were not so afraid of becoming mad, or of losing your body, you would understand this marvelous secret. But perhaps you must wait until you lose your fear to understand what I mean."

11

The last event I recorded in my field notes took place in September, 1965. It was the last of don Juan's teachings. I called it "a special state of nonordinary reality" because it was not the product of any of the plants I had used before. It seemed that don Juan elicited it by means of a careful manipulation of cues about himself; that is to say, he behaved in front of me in so skillful a manner that he created the clear and sustained impression that he was not really himself, but someone impersonating him. As a result I experienced a profound sense of conflict; I wanted to believe it was don Juan, and yet I could not be sure of it. The concomitant of the conflict was a conscious terror, so acute that it impaired my health for several weeks. Afterward I thought it would have been wise to end my apprenticeship then. I have never been a participant since that time, yet don Juan has not ceased to consider me an apprentice. He has regarded my withdrawal only as a necessary period of recapitulation, another step of learning, which may last indefinitely. Since that time, however, he has never expounded on his knowledge.

I wrote the detailed account of my last experience almost a month after it happened, although I had already written copious notes on its salient points on the following day during the hours of great emotional agitation which preceded the highest point of my terror.

Friday, October 29, 1965

On Thursday, September 30, 1965, I went to see don Juan. The brief, shallow states of nonordinary reality had been persisting in spite of my deliberate attempts to end them, or slough them off as don Juan had suggested. I felt that my condition was getting worse, for the duration of such states was increasing. I became sharply aware of the noise of airplanes. The sound of their motors going overhead would unavoidably catch my attention and fix it, to the point where I felt I was following the plane as if I were inside it, or flying with it. This sensation was very annoying. My inability to shake it off produced a deep anxiety in me.

Don Juan, after listening attentively to all the details, concluded that I was suffering from a loss of soul. I told him I had been having these hallucinations ever since the time I had smoked the mushrooms,

but he insisted that they were a new development. He said that earlier I had been afraid, and had just "dreamed nonsensical things," but that now I was truly bewitched. The proof was that the noise of the flying airplanes could carry me away. Ordinarily, he said, the noise of a brook or a river can trap a bewitched man who has lost his soul and carry him away to his death. He then asked me to describe all my activities during the time prior to experiencing the hallucinations. I listed all the activities I could remember. And from my account he deduced the place where I had lost my soul.

Don Juan seemed to be overly preoccupied, a state that was quite unusual for him. This naturally increased my apprehension. He said he had no definite idea as to who had trapped my soul, but whoever it was intended without doubt to kill me or make me very ill. Then he gave me precise instructions about a "fighting form," a specific bodily position to be maintained while I remained on my beneficial spot. I *had* to maintain this posture he called a form [*una forma para pelear*].

I asked him what all that was for, and whom I was going to fight. He replied that he was going away to see who had taken my soul, and to find out if it was possible to get it back. In the meantime, I was supposed to stay on my spot until his return. The fighting form was actually a precaution, he said, in case something happened during his absence, and it had to be used if I was attacked. It consisted of clapping the calf and thigh of my right leg and stomping my left foot in a kind of dance I had to do while facing the attacker.

He warned me that the form had to be adopted only in moments of extreme crisis, but so long as there was no danger in sight I should simply sit cross-legged on my spot. Under circumstances of extreme danger, however, he said I could resort to one last means of defense—hurling an object at the enemy. He told me that ordinarily one hurls a power object, but since I did not possess any I was forced to use any small rock that would fit into the palm of my right hand, a rock I could hold by pressing it against my palm with my thumb. He said that such a technique should be used only if one was indisputably in danger of losing one's life. The hurling of the object had to be accompanied by a war cry, a yell that had the property of directing the object to its mark. He emphatically recommended that I be careful and deliberate about the outcry and not use it at random, but only under "severe conditions of seriousness."

I asked what he meant by "severe conditions of seriousness." He said that the outcry or war cry was something that remained with a man for the duration of his life; thus it had to be good from the very beginning. And the only way to start it correctly was by holding back

one's natural fear and haste until one was absolutely filled with power, and then the yell would burst out with direction and power. He said these were the conditions of seriousness needed to launch the yell.

I asked him to explain about the power that was supposed to fill one before the outcry. He said that was something that ran through the body coming from the ground where one stood; it was a kind of power that emanated from the beneficial spot, to be exact. It was a force that pushed the yell out. If such a force was properly managed, the battle cry would be perfect.

I asked him again if he thought something was going to happen to me. He said he knew nothing about it and admonished me dramatically to stay glued to my spot for as long as it was necessary, because that was the only protection I had against anything that might happen.

I began to feel frightened; I begged him to be more specific. He said all he knew was that I should not move under any circumstances; I was not to go into the house or into the bush. Above all, he said, I should not utter a single word, not even to him. He said I could sing my Mescalito songs if I became too frightened, and then he added that I knew already too much about these matters to have to be warned like a child about the importance of doing everything correctly.

His admonitions produced a state of profound anguish in me. I was sure he was expecting something to happen. I asked him why he recommended that I sing the Mescalito songs, and what he believed was going to frighten me. He laughed and said I might become afraid of being alone. He walked into the house and closed the door behind him. I looked at my watch. It was 7:00 P.M. I sat quietly for a long time. There were no sounds coming from don Juan's room. Everything was quiet. It was windy. I thought of making a dash for my car to get my Windbreaker, but I did not dare to go against don Juan's advice. I was not sleepy, but tired; the cold wind made it impossible for me to rest.

Four hours later I heard don Juan walking around the house. I thought he might have left through the back to urinate in the bushes. Then he called me loudly.

"Hey boy! Hey boy! I need you here," he said.

I nearly got up to go to him. It was his voice, but not his tone, or his usual words. Don Juan had never called me "Hey boy!" So I stayed where I was. A chill went up my back. He began to yell again using the same, or a similar, phrase.

I heard him walking around the back of his house. He stumbled on a woodpile as if he did not know it was there. Then he came to the porch and sat next to the door with his back against the wall. He seemed heavier than usual. His movements were not slow or clumsy, just heav-

ier. He plunked down on the floor, instead of sliding nimbly as he usually did. Besides, that was not his spot, and don Juan would never under any circumstances sit anywhere else.

Then he talked to me again. He asked me why I refused to come when he needed me. He talked loudly. I did not want to look at him, and yet I had a compulsive urge to watch him. He began to swing slightly from side to side. I changed my position, adopted the fighting form he had taught me, and turned to face him. My muscles were stiff and strangely tense. I do not know what prompted me to adopt the fighting form, but perhaps it was because I believed don Juan was deliberately trying to scare me by creating the impression that the person I saw was not really himself. I felt he was very careful about doing the unaccustomed in order to establish doubt in my mind. I was afraid, but still I felt I was above it all, because I was actually taking stock of and analyzing the entire sequence.

At that point don Juan got up. His motions were utterly unfamiliar. He brought his arms in front of his body, and pushed himself up, lifting his backside first; then he grabbed the door and straightened out the top part of his body. I was amazed about how deeply familiar I was with his movements, and what an awesome feeling he had created by letting me see a don Juan who did not move like don Juan.

He took a couple of steps toward me. He held the lower part of his back with both hands as if he were trying to straighten up, or as if he were in pain. He whined and puffed. His nose seemed to be stuffed up. He said he was going to take me with him, and ordered me to get up and follow him. He walked toward the west side of the house. I shifted my position to face him. He turned to me. I did not move from my spot; I was glued to it.

He bellowed, "Hey boy! I told you to come with me. If you don't come I'll drag you!"

He walked toward me. I began beating my calf and thigh, and dancing fast. He got to the edge of the porch in front of me and nearly touched me. Frantically I prepared my body to adopt the hurling position, but he changed directions and moved away from me, toward the bushes to my left. At one moment, as he was walking away, he turned suddenly, but I was facing him.

He went out of sight. I retained the fighting posture for a while longer, but as I did not see him anymore I sat cross-legged again with my back to the rock. By then I was really frightened. I wanted to run away, yet that thought terrified me even more. I felt I would have been completely at his mercy if he had caught me on the way to my car. I began to sing the peyote songs I knew. But somehow I felt they were

impotent there. They served only as a pacifier, yet they soothed me. I sang them over and over.

About 2:45 A.M. I heard a noise inside the house. I immediately changed my position. The door was flung open and don Juan stumbled out. He was gasping and holding his throat. He knelt in front of me and moaned. He asked me in a high, whining voice to come and help him. Then he bellowed again and ordered me to come. He made gargling sounds. He pleaded with me to come and help him because something was choking him. He crawled on his hands and knees until he was perhaps four feet away. He extended his hands to me. He said, "Come here!" Then he got up. His arms were extended toward me. He seemed ready to grab me. I stomped my foot on the ground and clapped my calf and thigh. I was beside myself with fear.

He stopped and walked to the side of the house and into the bushes. I shifted my position to face him. Then I sat down again. I did not want to sing anymore. My energy seemed to be waning. My entire body ached; all my muscles were stiff and painfully contracted. I did not know what to think. I could not make up my mind whether to be angry at don Juan or not. I thought of jumping him, but somehow I knew he would have cut me down, like a bug. I really wanted to cry. I experienced a profound despair; the thought that don Juan was going all the way out to frighten me made me feel like weeping. I was incapable of finding a reason for his tremendous display of histrionics; his movements were so artful that I became confused. It was not as if he was trying to move like a woman; it was as if a woman was trying to move like don Juan. I had the impression that she was really trying to walk and move with don Juan's deliberation, but was too heavy and did not have the nimbleness of don Juan. Whoever it was in front of me created the impression of being a younger, heavy woman trying to imitate the slow movements of an agile old man.

These thoughts threw me into a state of panic. A cricket began to call loudly, very close to me. I noticed the richness of its tone; I fancied it to have a baritone voice. The call started to fade away. Suddenly my whole body jerked. I assumed the fighting position again and faced the direction from which the cricket's call had come. The sound was taking me away; it had begun to trap me before I realized it was only cricket-like. The sound got closer again. It became terribly loud. I started to sing my peyote songs louder and louder. Suddenly the cricket stopped. I immediately sat down, but kept on singing. A moment later I saw the shape of a man running toward me from the direction opposite to that of the cricket's call. I clapped my hands on my thigh and calf and stomped vigorously, frantically. The shape went by very fast, almost touching me.

It looked like a dog. I experienced so dreadful a fear that I was numb. I cannot recollect anything else I felt or thought.

The morning dew was refreshing. I felt better. Whatever the phenomenon was, it seemed to have withdrawn. It was 5:48 A.M. when don Juan opened the door quietly and came out. He stretched his arms, yawning, and glanced at me. He took two steps toward me, prolonging his yawning. I saw his eyes looking through half-closed eyelids. I jumped up; I knew then that whoever, or whatever, was in front of me was not don Juan.

I took a small, sharp-edged rock from the ground. It was next to my right hand. I did not look at it; I just held it by pressing it with my thumb against my extended fingers. I adopted the form don Juan had taught me. I felt a strange vigor filling me, in a matter of seconds. Then I yelled and hurled the rock at him. I thought it was a magnificent outcry. At that moment I did not care whether I lived or died. I felt the cry was awesome in its potency. It was piercing and prolonged, and it actually directed my aim. The figure in front wobbled and shrieked and staggered to the side of the house and into the bushes again.

It took me hours to calm down. I could not sit anymore; I kept on trotting on the same place. I had to breathe through my mouth to take in enough air.

At 11:00 A.M. don Juan came out again. I was going to jump up, but the movements were *his*. He went directly to his spot and sat down in his usual familiar way. He looked at me and smiled. He was don Juan! I went to him, and instead of being angry, I kissed his hand. I really believed then that he had not acted to create a dramatic effect, but that someone had impersonated him to cause me harm or to kill me.

The conversation began with speculations about the identity of a *female* person who had allegedly taken my soul. Then don Juan asked me to tell him about every detail of my experience.

I narrated the whole sequence of events in a very deliberate manner. He laughed all the way, as if it were a joke. When I had finished he said, "You did fine. You won the battle for your soul. But this matter is more serious than I thought. Your life wasn't worth two hoots last night. It is fortunate you learned something in the past. Had you not had a little training you would be dead by now, because whoever you saw last night meant to finish you off."

"How is it possible, don Juan, that she could take your form?"

"Very simple. She is a *diablera* and has a good helper on the other side. But she was not too good in assuming my likeness, and you caught on to her trick."

"Is a helper on the other side the same as an ally?"

"No, a helper is the aid of a diablero. A helper is a spirit that lives on the other side of the world and helps a diablero to cause sickness and pain. It helps him to kill."

"Can a diablero also have an ally, don Juan?"

"It is the diableros who have the allies, but before a diablero can tame an ally, he usually has a helper to aid him in his tasks."

"How about the woman who took your form, don Juan? Does she have only a helper and not an ally?"

"I don't know whether she has an ally or not. Some people do not like the power of an ally and prefer a helper. To tame an ally is hard work. It is easier to get a helper on the other side."

"Do you think *I* could get a helper?"

"To know that, you have to learn much more. We are again at the beginning, almost as on the first day you came over and asked me to tell you about Mescalito, and I could not because you would not have understood. That other side is the world of diableros. I think it would be best to tell you my own feelings in the same way my benefactor told me his. He was a diablero and a warrior; his life was inclined toward the force and the violence of the world. But I am neither of them. That is my nature. You have seen my world from the start. As to showing you the world of my benefactor, I can only put you at the door, and you will have to decide for yourself; you will have to learn about it by your effort alone. I must admit now that I made a mistake. It is much better, I see now, to start the way I did, myself. Then it is easier to realize how simple and yet how profound the difference is. A diablero is a diablero, and a warrior is a warrior. Or a man can be both. There are enough people who are both. But a man who only traverses the paths of life is everything. Today I am neither a warrior nor a diablero. For me there is only the traveling on the paths that have a heart, on any path that may have a heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge for me is to traverse its full length. And there I travel—looking, looking, breathlessly."

He paused. His face revealed a peculiar mood; he seemed to be unusually serious. I did not know what to ask or to say. He proceeded:

"The particular thing to learn is how to get to the crack between the worlds and how to enter the other world. There is a crack between the two worlds, the world of the diableros and the world of living men. There is a place where the two worlds overlap. The crack is there. It opens and closes like a door in the wind. To get there a man must exercise his will. He must, I should say, develop an indomitable desire for it, a single-minded dedication. But he must do it without the help of any power or any man. The man by himself must ponder and wish up to

a moment in which his body is ready to undergo the journey. That moment is announced by prolonged shaking of the limbs and violent vomiting. The man usually cannot sleep or eat, and wanes away. When the convulsions do not stop the man is ready to go, and the crack between the worlds appears right in front of his eyes, like a monumental door, a crack that goes up and down. When the crack opens the man has to slide through it. It is hard to see on the other side of the boundary. It is windy, like a sandstorm. The wind whirls around. The man then must walk in any direction. It will be a short or a long journey, depending on his willpower. A strong-willed man journeys shortly. An undecided, weak man journeys long and precariously. After this journey the man arrives at a sort of plateau. It is possible to distinguish some of its features clearly. It is a plane above the ground. It is possible to recognize it by the wind, which there becomes even more violent, whipping, roaring all around. On top of that plateau is the entrance to that other world. And there stands a skin that separates the two worlds; dead men go through it without a noise, but we have to break it with an outcry. The wind gathers strength, the same unruly wind that blows on the plateau. When the wind has gathered enough force, the man has to yell and the wind will push him through. Here his will has to be inflexible, too, so that he can fight the wind. All he needs is a gentle shove; he does not need to be blown to the ends of the other world. Once on the other side, the man will have to wander around. His good fortune would be to find a helper nearby—not too far from the entrance. The man has to ask him for help. In his own words he has to ask the helper to teach him and make him a diablero. When the helper agrees, he kills the man on the spot, and while he is dead he teaches him. When you make the trip yourself, depending on your luck, you may find a great diablero in the helper who will kill you and teach you. Most of the time, though, one encounters lesser brujos who have very little to teach. But neither you nor they have the power to refuse. The best instance is to find a male helper lest one become the prey of a diablera, who will make one suffer in an unbelievable manner. Women are always like that. But that depends on luck alone, unless one's benefactor is a great diablero himself, in which event he will have many helpers in the other world, and can direct one to see a particular helper. My benefactor was such a man. He directed me to encounter his spirit helper. After your return, you will not be the same man. You are committed to come back to see your helper often. And you are committed to wander farther and farther from the entrance, until finally one day you will go too far and will not be able to return. Sometimes a diablero may catch a soul and push it through the entrance and leave it in the custody of his helper until he robs the person

of all his willpower. In other cases, like yours for instance, the soul belongs to a strong-willed person, and the diablero may keep it inside his pouch, because it is too hard to carry otherwise. In such instances, as in yours, a fight may resolve the problem—a fight in which the diablero either wins all, or loses all. This time she lost the combat and had to release your soul. Had she won she would have taken it to her helper, for keeps."

"But how did I win?"

"You did not move from your spot. Had you moved one inch away you would have been demolished. She chose the moment I was away as the best time to strike, and she did it well. She failed because she did not count on your own nature, which is violent, and also because you did not budge from the spot on which you are invincible."

"How would she have killed me if I had moved?"

"She would have hit you like a thunderbolt. But above all she would have kept your soul and you would have wasted away."

"What is going to happen now, don Juan?"

"Nothing. You won your soul back. It was a good battle. You learned many things last night."

Afterward we began to look for the stone I had hurled. He said if we could find it we could be absolutely sure the affair had ended. We looked for nearly three hours. I had the feeling I would recognize it. But I could not.

That same day in the early evening don Juan took me into the hills around his house. There he gave me long and detailed instructions on specific fighting procedures. At one moment in the course of repeating certain prescribed steps I found myself alone. I had run up a slope and was out of breath. I was perspiring freely, and yet I was cold. I called don Juan several times, but he did not answer, and I began to experience a strange apprehension. I heard a rustling in the underbrush as if someone was coming toward me. I listened attentively, but the noise stopped. Then it came again, louder and closer. At that moment it occurred to me that the events of the preceding night were going to be repeated. In a matter of a few seconds my fear grew out of all proportion. The rustle in the underbrush got closer, and my strength waned. I wanted to scream or weep, run away or faint. My knees sagged; I fell to the ground, whining. I could not even close my eyes. After that, I remember only that don Juan made a fire and rubbed the contracted muscles of my arms and legs.

I remained in a state of profound distress for several hours. Afterward don Juan explained my disproportionate reaction as a common occurrence. I said I could not figure out logically what had caused my

panic, and he replied that it was not the fear of dying, but rather the fear of losing my soul, a fear common among men who do not have unbending intent.

That experience was the last of don Juan's teachings. Ever since that time I have refrained from seeking his lessons. And, although don Juan has not changed his benefactor's attitude toward me, I do believe that I have succumbed to the first enemy of a man of knowledge.

Part Two

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

The following structural scheme, abstracted from the data on the states of nonordinary reality presented in the foregoing part of this work, is conceived as an attempt to disclose the internal cohesion and the cogency of don Juan's teachings. The structure, as I assess it, is composed of four concepts which are the main units: (1) man of knowledge; (2) a man of knowledge had an ally; (3) an ally had a rule; and (4) the rule was corroborated by special consensus. These four units are in turn composed of a number of subsidiary ideas; thus the total structure comprises all the meaningful concepts that were presented until the time I discontinued the apprenticeship. In a sense, these units represent successive levels of analysis, each level modifying the preceding one.*

Because this conceptual structure is completely dependent on the meaning of all its units, the following clarification seems to be pertinent at this point: Throughout this entire work, meaning has been rendered as I understood it. The component concepts of don Juan's knowledge as I have presented them here could not be the exact duplicate of what he said himself. In spite of all the effort I have put forth to render these concepts as faithfully as possible, their meaning has been deflected by my own attempts to classify them. The arrangement of the four main units of this structural scheme is, however, a logical sequence which appears to be free from the influence of extraneous classificatory devices of my own. But, insofar as the component ideas of each main unit are concerned, it has been impossible to discard my personal influence. At certain points extraneous classificatory items are necessary in order to render the phenomena understandable. And, if such a task was to be accomplished here, it had to be done by zigzagging back and forth from the alleged meanings and classificatory scheme of the teacher to the meanings and classificatory devices of the apprentice.

THE OPERATIVE ORDER

THE FIRST UNIT

MAN OF KNOWLEDGE

At a very early stage of my apprenticeship, don Juan made the statement that the goal of his teachings was "to show how to become a

* For outline of the units of my structural analysis, see Appendix B.

man of knowledge." I use that statement as a point of departure. It is obvious that to become a man of knowledge was an operational goal. And it is also obvious that every part of don Juan's orderly teachings was geared to fulfill that goal in one way or another. My line of reasoning here is that under the circumstances "man of knowledge," being an operational goal, must have been indispensable to explaining some "operative order." Then, it is justifiable to conclude that, in order to understand that operative order, one has to understand its objective: man of knowledge.

After having established "man of knowledge" as the first structural unit, it was possible for me to arrange with assurance the following seven concepts as its proper components: (1) to become a man of knowledge was a matter of learning; (2) a man of knowledge had unbending intent; (3) a man of knowledge had clarity of mind; (4) to become a man of knowledge was a matter of strenuous labor; (5) a man of knowledge was a warrior; (6) to become a man of knowledge was an unceasing process; and (7) a man of knowledge had an ally.

These seven concepts were themes. They ran through the teachings, determining the character of don Juan's entire knowledge. Inasmuch as the operational goal of his teachings was to produce a man of knowledge, everything he taught was imbued with the specific characteristics of each of the seven themes. Together they construed the concept "man of knowledge" as a way of conducting oneself, a way of behaving that was the end result of a long and hazardous training. "Man of knowledge," however, was not a guide to behavior, but a set of principles encompassing all the unordinary circumstances pertinent to the knowledge being taught.

Each one of the seven themes was composed, in turn, of various other concepts, which covered their different facets.

From don Juan's statements it was possible to assume that a man of knowledge could be a diablero, that is, a black sorcerer. He stated that his teacher was a diablero and so was he in the past, although he had ceased to be concerned with certain aspects of the practice of sorcery. Since the goal of his teaching was to show how to become a man of knowledge, and since his knowledge consisted of being a diablero, there may have been an inherent connection between man of knowledge and diablero. Although don Juan never used the two terms interchangeably, the likelihood that they were connected raised the possibility that "man of knowledge" with its seven themes and their component concepts covered, theoretically, all the circumstances that might have arisen in the course of becoming a diablero.

To Become a Man of Knowledge Was a Matter of Learning

The first theme made it implicit that learning was the only possible way of becoming a man of knowledge, and that in turn implied the act of making a resolute effort to achieve an end. To become a man of knowledge was the end result of a process, as opposed to an immediate acquisition through an act of grace or through bestowal by supernatural powers. The plausibility of learning how to become a man of knowledge warranted the existence of a system for teaching one how to accomplish it.

The first theme had three components: (1) there were no overt requirements for becoming a man of knowledge; (2) there were some covert requirements; (3) the decision as to who could learn to become a man of knowledge was made by an impersonal power.

Apparently there were no overt prerequisites that would have determined who was, or who was not, qualified to learn how to become a man of knowledge. Ideally, the task was open to anybody who wished to pursue it. Yet, in practice, such a stand was inconsistent with the fact that don Juan as a teacher selected his apprentices.

In fact, any teacher under the circumstances would have selected his apprentices by means of matching them against some covert prerequisites. The specific nature of these prerequisites was never formalized; don Juan only insinuated that there were certain clues one had to bear in mind when viewing a prospective apprentice. The clues he alluded to were supposed to reveal whether or not the candidate had a certain disposition of character, which don Juan called "unbending intent."

Nevertheless, the final decision in matters of who could learn to become a man of knowledge was left to an impersonal power that was known to don Juan, but was outside his sphere of volition. The impersonal power was credited with pointing out the right person by allowing him to perform a deed of extraordinary nature, or by creating a set of peculiar circumstances around that person. Hence, there was never a conflict between the absence of overt prerequisites and the existence of undisclosed, covert prerequisites.

The man who was singled out in that manner became the apprentice. Don Juan called him the *escogido,* the "one who was chosen." But to be an escogido meant more than to be a mere apprentice. An escogido, by the sheer act of being selected by a power, was considered already to be different from ordinary men. He was considered already to be the recipient of a minimum amount of power which was supposed to be augmented by learning.

But learning was a process of unending quest, and the power that

made the original decision, or a similar power, was expected to make similar decisions on the issue of whether an escogido could continue learning or whether he had been defeated. Those decisions were manifested through omens that occurred at any point of the teachings. In that respect, any peculiar circumstances surrounding an apprentice were considered to be such omens.

A Man of Knowledge Had Unbending Intent

The idea that a man of knowledge needed unbending intent referred to the exercise of volition. Having unbending intent meant having the will to execute a necessary procedure by maintaining oneself at all times rigidly within the boundaries of the knowledge being taught. A man of knowledge needed a rigid will in order to endure the obligatory quality that every act possessed when it was performed in the context of his knowledge.

The obligatory quality of all the acts performed in such a context, and their being inflexible and predetermined, were no doubt unpleasant to any man, for which reason a modicum of unbending intent was sought as the only covert requirement needed by a prospective apprentice.

Unbending intent was composed of (1) frugality, (2) soundness of judgment, and (3) lack of freedom to innovate.

A man of knowledge needed frugality because the majority of the obligatory acts dealt with instances or with elements that were either outside the boundaries of ordinary everyday life, or were not customary in ordinary activity, and the man who had to act in accordance with them needed an extraordinary effort every time he took action. It was implicit that one could have been capable of such an extraordinary effort only by being frugal with any other activity that did not deal directly with such predetermined actions.

Since all acts were predetermined and obligatory, a man of knowledge needed soundness of judgment. This concept did not imply common sense, but did imply the capacity to assess the circumstances surrounding any need to act. A guide for such an assessment was provided by bringing together, as rationales, all the parts of the teachings which were at one's command at the given moment in which any action had to be carried out. Thus, the guide was always changing as more parts were learned; yet it always implied the conviction that any obligatory act one may have had to perform was, in fact, the most appropriate under the circumstances.

Because all acts were preestablished and compulsory, having to carry them out meant lack of freedom to innovate. Don Juan's system of

imparting knowledge was so well established that there was no possibility of altering it in any way.

A Man of Knowledge Had Clarity of Mind

Clarity of mind was the theme that provided a sense of direction. The fact that all acts were predetermined meant that one's orientation within the knowledge being taught was equally predetermined; as a consequence, clarity of mind supplied only a sense of direction. It reaffirmed continuously the validity of the course being taken through the component ideas of (1) freedom to seek a path, (2) knowledge of the specific purpose, and (3) being fluid.

It was believed that one had freedom to seek a path. Having the freedom to choose was not incongruous with the lack of freedom to innovate; these two ideas were not in opposition nor did they interfere with each other. Freedom to seek a path referred to the liberty to choose among different possibilities of action which were equally effective and usable. The criterion for choosing was the advantage of one possibility over others, based on one's preference. As a matter of fact, the freedom to choose a path imparted a sense of direction through the expression of personal inclinations.

Another way to create a sense of direction was through the idea that there was a specific purpose for every action performed in the context of the knowledge being taught. Therefore, a man of knowledge needed clarity of mind in order to match his own specific reasons for acting with the specific purpose of every action. The knowledge of the specific purpose of every action was the guide he used to judge the circumstances surrounding any need to act.

Another facet of clarity of mind was the idea that a man of knowledge, in order to reinforce the performance of his obligatory actions, needed to assemble all the resources that the teachings had placed at his command. This was the idea of being fluid. It created a sense of direction by giving one the feeling of being malleable and resourceful. The compulsory quality of all acts would have imbued one with a sense of stiffness or sterility had it not been for the idea that a man of knowledge needed to be fluid.

To Become a Man of Knowledge Was a Matter of Strenuous Labor

A man of knowledge had to possess or had to develop in the course of his training an all-around capacity for exertion. Don Juan stated that

to become a man of knowledge was a matter of strenuous labor. Strenuous labor denoted a capacity (1) to put forth dramatic exertion; (2) to achieve efficacy; and (3) to meet challenge.

In the path of a man of knowledge drama was undoubtedly the outstanding single issue, and a special type of exertion was needed for responding to circumstances that required dramatic exploitation; that is to say, a man of knowledge needed dramatic exertion. Taking don Juan's behavior as an example, at first glance it may have seemed that his dramatic exertion was only his own idiosyncratic preference for histrionics. Yet his dramatic exertion was always much more than acting; it was rather a profound state of belief. He imparted through dramatic exertion the peculiar quality of finality to all the acts he performed. As a consequence, then, his acts were set on a stage in which death was one of the main protagonists. It was implicit that death was a real possibility in the course of learning because of the inherently dangerous nature of the items with which a man of knowledge dealt; then, it was logical that the dramatic exertion created by the conviction that death was an ubiquitous player was more than histrionics.

Exertion entailed not only drama, but also the need of efficacy. Exertion had to be effective; it had to possess the quality of being properly channeled, of being suitable. The idea of impending death created not only the drama needed for overall emphasis, but also the conviction that every action involved a struggle for survival, the conviction that annihilation would result if one's exertion did not meet the requirement of being efficacious.

Exertion also entailed the idea of challenge, that is, the act of testing whether, and proving that, one was capable of performing a proper act within the rigorous boundaries of the knowledge being taught.

A Man of Knowledge Was a Warrior

The existence of a man of knowledge was an unceasing struggle, and the idea that he was a warrior, leading a warrior's life, provided one with the means for achieving emotional stability. The idea of a man at war encompassed four concepts: (1) a man of knowledge had to have respect; (2) he had to have fear; (3) he had to be wide-awake; (4) he had to be self-confident. Hence, to be a warrior was a form of self-discipline which emphasized individual accomplishment; yet it was a stand in which personal interests were reduced to a minimum, as in most instances personal interest was incompatible with the rigor needed to perform any predetermined, obligatory act.

A man of knowledge in his role of warrior was obligated to have an attitude of deferential regard for the items with which he dealt; he had to

imbue everything related to his knowledge with profound respect in order to place everything in a meaningful perspective. Having respect was equivalent to having assessed one's insignificant resources when facing the Unknown.

If one remained in that frame of thought, the idea of respect was logically extended to include oneself, for one was as unknown as the Unknown itself. The exercise of so sobering a feeling of respect transformed the apprenticeship of this specific knowledge, which may otherwise have appeared to be absurd, into a very rational alternative.

Another necessity of a warrior's life was the need to experience and carefully to evaluate the sensation of fear. The ideal was that, in spite of fear, one had to proceed with the course of one's acts. Fear was supposed to be conquered and there was an alleged time in the life of a man of knowledge when it was vanquished, but first one had to be conscious of being afraid and duly to evaluate that sensation. Don Juan asserted that one was capable of conquering fear only by facing it.

As a warrior, a man of knowledge also needed to be wide-awake. A man at war had to be on the alert in order to be cognizant of most of the factors pertinent to the two mandatory aspects of awareness: (1) awareness of intent and (2) awareness of the expected flux.

Awareness of intent was the act of being cognizant of the factors involved in the relationship between the specific purpose of any obligatory act and one's own specific purpose for acting. Since all the obligatory acts had a definite purpose, a man of knowledge had to be wide-awake; that is, he needed to be capable at all times of matching the definite purpose of every obligatory act with the definite reason that he had in mind for desiring to act.

A man of knowledge, by being aware of that relationship, was also capable of being cognizant of what was believed to be the expected flux. What I have called here the "awareness of the expected flux" referred to the certainty that one was capable of detecting at all times the important variables involved in the relationship between the specific purpose of every act and one's specific reason for acting. By being aware of the expected flux one was supposed to detect the most subtle changes. That deliberate awareness of changes accounted for the recognition and interpretation of omens and of other unordinary events.

The last aspect of the idea of a warrior's behavior was the need for self-confidence, that is, the assurance that the specific purpose of an act one may have chosen to perform was the only plausible alternative for one's own specific reasons for acting. Without self-confidence, one would have been incapable of fulfilling one of the most important aspects of the teachings: the capacity to claim knowledge as power.

To Become a Man of Knowledge Was an Unceasing Process

Being a man of knowledge was not a condition entailing permanency. There was never the certainty that, by carrying out the predetermined steps of the knowledge being taught, one would become a man of knowledge. It was implicit that the function of the steps was only to show how to become a man of knowledge. Thus, becoming a man of knowledge was a task that could not be fully achieved; rather, it was an unceasing process comprising (1) the idea that one had to renew the quest of becoming a man of knowledge; (2) the idea of one's impermanency; and (3) the idea that one had to follow the path with heart.

The constant renewal of the quest of becoming a man of knowledge was expressed in the theme of the four symbolic enemies encountered on the path of learning: fear, clarity, power, and old age. Renewing the quest implied the gaining and the maintenance of control over oneself. A true man of knowledge was expected to battle each of the four enemies, in succession, until the last moment of his life, in order to keep himself actively engaged in becoming a man of knowledge. Yet, despite the truthful renewal of the quest, the odds were inevitably against man; he would succumb to his last symbolic enemy. This was the idea of impermanency.

Offsetting the negative value of one's impermanency was the notion that one had to follow the "path with heart." The path with heart was a metaphorical way of asserting that in spite of being impermanent one still had to proceed and had to be capable of finding satisfaction and personal fulfillment in the act of choosing the most amenable alternative and identifying oneself completely with it.

Don Juan synthesized the rationale of his whole knowledge in the metaphor that the important thing for him was to find a path with heart and then travel its length, meaning that the identification with the amenable alternative was enough for him. The journey by itself was sufficient; any hope of arriving at a permanent position was outside the boundaries of his knowledge.

THE SECOND UNIT

A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE HAD AN ALLY

The idea that a man of knowledge had an ally was the most important of the seven component themes, for it was the only one that was indispensable to explaining what a man of knowledge was. In don

Juan's classificatory scheme a man of knowledge had an ally, whereas the average man did not, and having an ally was what made him different from ordinary men.

Don Juan described an ally as being "a power capable of transporting a man beyond the boundaries of himself"; that is, an ally was a power that allowed one to transcend the realm of ordinary reality. Consequently, to have an ally implied having power; and the fact that a man of knowledge had an ally was by itself proof that the operational goal of the teachings had been fulfilled. Since that goal was to show how to become a man of knowledge, and since a man of knowledge was one who had an ally, another way of describing the operational goal of don Juan's teachings was to say that they also showed how to obtain an ally. The concept "man of knowledge," as a sorcerer's philosophical frame, had meaning for anyone who wanted to live within that frame only insofar as he had an ally.

I have classified this last component theme of man of knowledge as the second main structural unit because of its indispensability for explaining what a man of knowledge was.

In don Juan's teachings, there were two allies. The first was contained in the *Datura* plants commonly known as Jimson weed. Don Juan called that ally by one of the Spanish names of the plant, *yerba del diablo* (devil's weed). According to him any species of *Datura* was the container of the ally. Yet every sorcerer had to grow a patch of one species which he called his own, not only in the sense that the plants were his private property, but in the sense that they were personally identified with him.

Don Juan's own plants belonged to the species *inoxia;* there seemed to be no correlation, however, between that fact and differences that may have existed between the two species of *Datura* accessible to him.

The second ally was contained in a mushroom I identified as belonging to the genus *Psilocybe;* it was possibly *Psilocybe mexicana,* but the classification was only tentative because I was incapable of procuring a specimen for laboratory analysis.

Don Juan called this ally *humito* (little smoke), suggesting that the ally was analogous to smoke or to the smoking mixture he made with the mushroom. The smoke was referred to as if it were the real container, yet he made it clear that the power was associated with only one species of *Psilocybe;* thus special care was needed at the time of collecting in order not to confuse it with any of a dozen other species of the same genus which grew in the same area.

An ally as a meaningful concept included the following ideas and

their ramifications: (1) in ally was formless; (2) an ally was perceived as a quality; (3) an ally was tamable; (4) an ally had a rule.

An Ally Was Formless

An ally was believed to be an entity existing outside and independent of oneself, yet in spite of being a separate entity an ally was believed to be formless. I have established "formlessness" as a condition that is the opposite of "having definite form," a distinction made in view of the fact that there were other powers similar to an ally which had a definitely perceivable form. An ally's condition of formlessness meant that it did not possess a distinct, or a vaguely defined, or even a recognizable, form; and such a condition implied that an ally was not visible at any time.

An Ally Was Perceived as a Quality

A sequel to an ally's formlessness was another condition expressed in the idea that an ally was perceived only as a quality of the senses; that is to say, since an ally was formless its presence was noticed only by its effects on the sorcerer. Don Juan classified some of those effects as having anthropomorphic qualities. He depicted an ally as having the character of a human being, thus implying that an individual sorcerer was in the position of choosing the most suitable ally by matching his own character with an ally's alleged anthropomorphic characteristics.

The two allies involved in the teachings were presented by don Juan as having a set of antithetical qualities.

Don Juan categorized the ally contained in *Datura inoxia* as having two qualities: it was woman-like, and it was a giver of superfluous power. He thought these two qualities were thoroughly undesirable. His statements on the subject were definite, but he indicated at the same time that his value judgment on the matter was merely a personalistic choice.

The most important characteristic was undoubtedly what don Juan called its woman-like nature. The fact that it was depicted as being woman-like did not mean, however, that the ally was a female power. It seemed that the analogy of a woman may have been only a metaphorical way don Juan used to describe what he thought to be the unpleasant effects of the ally. Besides, the Spanish name of the plant, *yerba,* because of its feminine gender, may have also helped to create the female analogy. At any rate, the personification of this ally as a woman-like power ascribed to it the following anthropomorphic qualities: (1) it was possessive; (2) it was violent; (3) it was unpredictable; and (4) it had deleterious effects.

Don Juan believed that the ally had the capacity to enslave the men who became its followers; he explained this capacity as the quality of

being possessive, which he correlated with a woman's character. The ally possessed its followers by bestowing power on them, by creating a feeling of dependency, and by giving them physical strength and well-being.

This ally was also believed to be violent. Its woman-like violence was expressed in its forcing its followers to engage in disruptive acts of brute force. And this specific characteristic made it best suited for men of fierce natures who wanted to find in violence a key to personal power.

Another woman-like characteristic was unpredictability. For don Juan it meant that the ally's effects were never consistent; rather, they were supposed to change erratically, and there was no discernible way of predicting them. The ally's inconsistency was to be counteracted by the sorcerer's meticulous and dramatic care of every detail of its handling. Any unfavorable turn that was unaccountable, as a result of error or mishandling, was explained as a result of the ally's woman-like unpredictability.

Because of its possessiveness, violence, and unpredictability, this ally was thought to have an overall deleterious effect on the character of its followers. Don Juan believed that the ally willfully strove to transmit its woman-like characteristics, and that its effort to do so actually succeeded.

But, alongside its woman-like nature, this ally had another facet which was also perceived as a quality: it was a giver of superfluous power. Don Juan was very emphatic on this point, and he stressed that as a generous giver of power the ally was unsurpassable. It was purported to furnish its followers with physical strength, a feeling of audacity, and the prowess to perform extraordinary deeds. In Don Juan's judgment, however, so exorbitant a power was superfluous; he stated that, for himself at least, there was no need of it anymore. Nevertheless, he presented it as a strong incentive for a prospective man of knowledge, should the latter have a natural inclination to seek power.

Don Juan's idiosyncratic point of view was that the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana,* on the other hand, had the most adequate and most valuable characteristics: (1) it was male-like, and (2) it was a giver of ecstasy.

He depicted this ally as being the antithesis of the one contained in *Datura* plants. He considered it to be male-like, manly. Its condition of masculinity seemed to be analogous to the female-like condition of the other ally; that is, it was not a male power, but don Juan classified its effects in terms of what he considered to be manly behavior. In this instance, too, the masculine gender of the Spanish word *humito* may have suggested the analogy to a male power.

The anthropomorphic qualities of this ally which don Juan judged to be proper to a man were the following: (1) it was dispassionate; (2) it was gentle; (3) it was predictable; and (4) it had beneficial effects.

Don Juan's idea of the dispassionate nature of the ally was expressed in the belief that it was fair, that it never actually demanded extravagant acts from its followers. It never made men its slaves, because it did not bestow easy power on them; on the contrary, Humito was hard, but just, with its followers.

The fact that the ally did not elicit overt violent behavior made it gentle. It was supposed to induce a sensation of bodilessness, and thus don Juan presented it as being calm, gentle, and a giver of peace.

It was also predictable. Don Juan described its effects on all its individual followers and in the successive experiences of any single man as being constant; in other words, its effects did not vary or, if they did, they were so similar that they were counted as being the same.

As a consequence of being dispassionate, gentle, and predictable, this ally was thought to have another manly characteristic: a beneficial effect on the character of its followers. Humito's manliness was supposed to create a very rare condition of emotional stability in them. Don Juan believed that under the ally's guidance one would temper one's heart and acquire balance.

A corollary of all the ally's manly characteristics was believed to be a capacity to give ecstasy. This other facet of its nature was perceived also as a quality. Humito was credited with removing the body of its followers, thus allowing them to execute specialized forms of activity pertinent to a state of bodilessness. And don Juan maintained that those specialized forms of activity led unavoidably to a condition of ecstasy. The ally contained in the *Psilocybe* was said to be ideal for men whose natures predisposed them to seek contemplation.

An Ally Was Tamable

The idea that an ally was tamable implied that as a power it had the potential of being used. Don Juan explained it as an ally's innate capacity of being utilizable; after a sorcerer had tamed an ally he was thought to be in command of its specialized power which meant that he could manipulate it to his own advantage. An ally's capacity of being tamed was counterposed to the incapacity of other powers, which were similar to an ally except that they did not yield to being manipulated.

The manipulation of an ally had two aspects: (1) an ally was a vehicle; (2) an ally was a helper.

An ally was a vehicle in the sense that it served to transport a sorcerer into the realm of nonordinary reality. Insofar as my personal

knowledge was concerned, the allies both served as vehicles, although the function had different implications for each of them.

The overall, undesirable qualities of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia,* especially its quality of unpredictability, turned it into a dangerous, undependable vehicle. Ritual was the only possible protection against its inconsistency, but that was never enough to ensure the ally's stability; a sorcerer using this ally as a vehicle had to wait for favorable omens before proceeding.

The ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana,* on the other hand, was thought to be a steady and predictable vehicle as a result of all its valuable qualities. As a consequence of its predictability, a sorcerer using this ally did not need to engage in any kind of preparatory ritual.

The other aspect of an ally's manipulability was expressed in the idea that an ally was a helper. To be a helper meant that an ally, after serving a sorcerer as a vehicle, was again usable as an aid or a guide to assist him in achieving whatever goal he had in mind in going into the realm of nonordinary reality.

In their capacity as helpers, the two allies had different, unique properties. The complexity and the applicability of these properties increased as one advanced on the learning path. But, in general terms, the ally contained in *Datura inoxia* was believed to be an extraordinary helper, and this capacity was thought to be a corollary of its facility to give superfluous power. The ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana,* however, was considered to be an even more extraordinary helper. Don Juan thought it was matchless in the function of being a helper, which he regarded as an extension of its overall valuable qualities.

THE THIRD UNIT

AN ALLY HAD A RULE

Alone among the components of the concept "ally," the idea that an ally had a rule was indispensable for explaining what an ally was. Because of that indispensability I have placed it as the third main unit in this structural scheme.

The rule, which don Juan called also the law, was the rigid organizing concept regulating all the actions that had to be executed and the behavior that had to be observed throughout the process of handling an ally. The rule was transmitted verbally from teacher to apprentice, ideally without alteration, through the sustained interaction between them. The rule was thus more than a body of regulations; it was, rather, a series of outlines of activity governing the course to be followed in the process of manipulating an ally.

Undoubtedly many elements would have fulfilled don Juan's definition of an ally as a "power capable of transporting a man beyond the boundaries of himself." Anyone accepting that definition could reasonably have conceived that anything possessing such a capability would be an ally. And logically, even bodily conditions produced by hunger, fatigue, illness, and the like could have served as allies, for they might have possessed the capacity of transporting a man beyond the realm of ordinary reality. But the idea that an ally had a rule eliminated all these possibilities. An ally was a power that had a rule. All the other possibilities could not be considered as allies because they had no rule.

As a concept the rule comprehended the following ideas and their various components: (1) the rule was inflexible; (2) the rule was noncumulative; (3) the rule was corroborated in ordinary reality; (4) the rule was corroborated in nonordinary reality; and (5) the rule was corroborated by special consensus.

The Rule Was Inflexible

The outlines of activity forming the body of the rule were unavoidable steps that one had to follow in order to achieve the operational goal of the teachings. This compulsory quality of the rule was rendered in the idea that it was inflexible. The inflexibility of the rule was intimately related to the idea of efficacy. Dramatic exertion created an incessant battle for survival, and under those conditions only the most effective act that one could perform would ensure one's survival. As individualistic points of reference were not permitted, the rule prescribed the actions constituting the only alternative for survival. Thus the rule had to be inflexible; it had to require a definite compliance to its dictum.

Compliance with the rule, however, was not absolute. In the course of the teachings I recorded one instance in which its inflexibility was canceled out. Don Juan explained that example of deviation as a special favor stemming from direct intervention of an ally. In this instance, owing to my unintentional error in handling the ally contained in *Datura inoxia,* the rule had been breached. Don Juan extrapolated from the occurrence that an ally had the capacity to intervene directly and withhold the deleterious, and usually fatal, effect resulting from noncompliance with its rule. Such evidence of flexibility was thought to be always the product of a strong bond of affinity between the ally and its follower.

The Rule Was Noncumulative

The assumption here was that all conceivable methods of manipulating an ally had already been used. Theoretically, the rule was noncumulative; there was no possibility of augmenting it. The idea of the

noncumulative nature of the rule was also related to the concept of efficacy. Since the rule prescribed the only effective alternative for one's personal survival, any attempt to change it or to alter its course by innovation was considered to be not only a superfluous act, but a deadly one. One had only the possibility of adding to one's personal knowledge of the rule, either under the teacher's guidance or under the special guidance of the ally itself. The latter was considered to be an instance of direct acquisition of knowledge, not an addition to the body of the rule.

The Rule Was Corroborated in Ordinary Reality

Corroboration of the rule meant the act of verifying it, the act of attesting to its validity by confirming it pragmatically in an experimental manner. Because the rule dealt with situations of ordinary and of nonordinary reality, its corroboration took place in both areas.

The situations of ordinary reality with which the rule dealt were most often remarkably uncommon situations, but, no matter how unusual they were, the rule was corroborated in ordinary reality. For that reason it has been considered to fall beyond the scope of this work, and should properly be the realm of another study. That part of the rule concerned the details of the procedures employed in recognizing, collecting, mixing, preparing, and caring for the power plants in which the allies were contained, the details of other procedures involved in the uses of such power plants, and other similar minutiae.

The Rule Was Corroborated in Nonordinary Reality

The rule was also corroborated in nonordinary reality, and the corroboration was carried out in the same pragmatic, experimental manner of validation as would have been employed in situations of ordinary reality. The idea of a pragmatic corroboration involved two concepts: (1) meetings with the ally, which I have called the states of nonordinary reality; and (2) the specific purposes of the rule.

The states of nonordinary reality.—The two plants in which the allies were contained, when used in conformity with the allies' respective rules, produced states of peculiar perception which don Juan classified as meetings with the ally. He placed extraordinary emphasis on eliciting them, an emphasis summed up in the idea that one had to meet with the ally as many times as possible in order to verify its rule in a pragmatic, experimental manner. The assumption was that the proportion of the rule that was likely to be verified was in direct correlation with the number of times one met with the ally.

The exclusive method of inducing a meeting with the ally was, naturally, through the appropriate use of the plant in which the ally was

contained. Nonetheless, don Juan hinted that at a certain advanced stage of learning the meetings could have taken place without the use of the plant; that is to say, they could have been elicited by an act of volition alone.

I have called the meetings with the ally states of nonordinary reality. I chose the term "nonordinary reality" because it conformed with don Juan's assertion that such meetings took place in a continuum of reality, a reality that was only slightly different from the ordinary reality of everyday life. Consequently, nonordinary reality had specific characteristics that could have been assessed in presumably equal terms by everyone. Don Juan never formulated these characteristics in a definite manner, but his reticence seemed to stem from the idea that each man had to claim knowledge as a matter of personal nature.

The following categories, which I consider the specific characteristics of nonordinary reality, were drawn from my personal experience. Yet, in spite of their seemingly idiosyncratic origin, they were reinforced and developed by don Juan under the premises of his knowledge; he conducted his teachings as if these characteristics were inherent in nonordinary reality: (1) nonordinary reality was utilizable; (2) nonordinary reality had component elements.

The first characteristic—that nonordinary reality was utilizable—implied that it was fit for actual service. Don Juan explained time and time again that the encompassing concern of his knowledge was the pursuit of practical results, and that such a pursuit was pertinent in ordinary as well as in nonordinary reality. He maintained that in his knowledge there were the means of putting nonordinary reality into service, in the same way as ordinary reality. According to that assertion, the states induced by the allies were elicited with the deliberate intention of being used. In this particular instance don Juan's rationale was that the meetings with the allies were set up to learn their secrets, and this rationale served as a rigid guide to screen out other personalistic motives that one may have had for seeking the states of nonordinary reality.

The second characteristic of nonordinary reality was that it had component elements. Those component elements were the items, the actions, and the events that one perceived, seemingly with one's senses, as being the content of a state of nonordinary reality. The total picture of nonordinary reality was made up of elements that appeared to possess qualities both of the elements of ordinary reality and of the components of an ordinary dream, although they were not on a par with either one.

According to my personal judgment, the component elements of nonordinary reality had three unique characteristics: (1) stability, (2) singularity, and (3) lack of ordinary consensus. These qualities made

them stand on their own as discrete units possessing an unmistakable individuality.

The component elements of nonordinary reality had stability in the sense that they were constant. In this respect they were similar to the component elements of ordinary reality, for they neither shifted nor disappeared, as would the component elements of ordinary dreams. It seemed as if every detail that made up a component element of nonordinary reality had a concreteness of its own, a concreteness I perceived as being extraordinarily stable. The stability was so pronounced that it allowed me to establish the criterion that, in nonordinary reality, one always possessed the capacity to come to a halt in order to examine any of the component elements for what appeared to be an indefinite length of time. The application of this criterion permitted me to differentiate the states of nonordinary reality used by don Juan from other states of peculiar perception which may have appeared to be nonordinary reality, but which did not yield to this criterion.

The second exclusive characteristic of the component elements of nonordinary reality—their singularity—meant that every detail of the component elements was a single, individual item; it seemed as if each detail was isolated from others, or as if details appeared one at a time. The singularity of the component elements seemed further to create a unique necessity, which may have been common to everybody: the imperative need, the urge, to amalgamate all isolated details into a total scene, a total composite. Don Juan was obviously aware of that need and used it on every possible occasion.

The third unique characteristic of the component elements, and the most dramatic of all, was their lack of ordinary consensus. One perceived the component elements while being in a state of complete solitude, which was more like the aloneness of a man witnessing by himself an unfamiliar scene in ordinary reality than like the solitude of dreaming. As the stability of the component elements of nonordinary reality enabled one to stop and examine any of them for what appeared to be an indefinite length of time, it seemed almost as if they were elements of everyday life; however, the difference between the component elements of the two states of reality was their capacity for ordinary consensus. By ordinary consensus I mean the tacit or the implicit agreement on the component elements of everyday life which fellowmen give to one another in various ways. For the component elements of nonordinary reality, ordinary consensus was unattainable. In this respect nonordinary reality was closer to a state of dreaming than to ordinary reality. And yet, because of their unique characteristics of stability and singularity, the component elements of nonordinary reality had a compelling

quality of realness which seemed to foster the necessity of validating their existence in terms of consensus.

The specific purpose of the rule.—The other component of the concept that the rule was verified in nonordinary reality was the idea that the rule had a specific purpose. That purpose was the achievement, by using an ally, of a utilitarian goal. In the context of don Juan's teachings, it was assumed that the rule was learned by corroborating it in ordinary and nonordinary reality. The decisive facet of the teachings was, however, corroboration of the rule in the states of nonordinary reality; and what was corroborated in the actions and elements perceived in nonordinary reality was the specific purpose of the rule. That specific purpose dealt with the ally's power, that is, with the manipulation of an ally first as a vehicle and then as a helper, but don Juan always treated each instance of the specific purpose of the rule as a single unit implicitly covering these two areas.

Because the specific purpose referred to the manipulation of the ally's power, it had an inseparable sequel—the manipulatory techniques.

The manipulatory techniques were the actual procedures, the actual operations, undertaken in each instance involving the manipulation of an ally's power. The idea that an ally was manipulatable warranted its usefulness in the achievement of pragmatic goals, and the manipulatory techniques were the procedures that supposedly rendered the ally usable.

Specific purpose and manipulatory techniques formed a single unit which a sorcerer had to know exactly in order to command his ally with efficacy.

Don Juan's teachings included the following specific purposes of the two allies' rules. I have arranged them here in the same order in which he presented them to me.

The first specific purpose that was verified in nonordinary reality was testing with the ally contained in *Datura inoxia.* The manipulatory technique was ingesting a potion made with a section of the root of the *Datura* plant. Ingesting that potion produced a shallow state of nonordinary reality, which don Juan used for testing me in order to determine whether or not, as a prospective apprentice, I had affinity with the ally contained in the plant. The potion was supposed to produce either a sensation of unspecified physical well-being or a feeling of great discomfort, effects that don Juan judged to be, respectively, a sign of affinity or of the lack of it.

The second specific purpose was divination. It was also part of the rule of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia.* Don Juan considered divination to be a form of specialized movement, on the assumption that a sorcerer was transported by the ally to a particular compartment of

nonordinary reality where he was capable of divining events that were otherwise unknown to him.

The manipulatory technique of the second specific purpose was a process of ingestion-absorption. A potion made with *Datura* root was ingested, and an unguent made with *Datura* seeds was rubbed on the temporal and frontal areas of the head. I have used the term "ingestion-absorption" because ingestion might have been aided by skin absorption in producing a state of nonordinary reality, or skin absorption might have been aided by ingestion.

This manipulatory technique required the utilization of other elements besides the *Datura* plant, in this instance two lizards. They were supposed to serve the sorcerer as instruments of movement, meaning here the peculiar perception of being in a particular realm in which one was capable of hearing a lizard talk and then of visualizing whatever it had said. Don Juan explained such phenomena as the lizards answering the questions that had been posed for divination.

The third specific purpose of the rule of the ally contained in the *Datura* plants dealt with another specialized form of movement, bodily flight. As don Juan explained, a sorcerer using this ally was capable of flying bodily over enormous distances; the bodily flight was the sorcerer's capacity to move through nonordinary reality and then to return at will to ordinary reality.

The manipulatory technique of the third specific purpose was also a process of ingestion-absorption. A potion made with *Datura* root was ingested, and an unguent made with *Datura* seeds was rubbed on the soles of the feet, on the inner part of both legs, and on the genitals.

The third specific purpose was not corroborated in depth; don Juan implied that he had not disclosed other aspects of the manipulatory technique which would permit a sorcerer to acquire a sense of direction while moving.

The fourth specific purpose of the rule was testing, the ally being contained in *Psilocybe mexicana.* The testing was not intended to determine affinity or lack of affinity with the ally, but rather to be an unavoidable first trial, or the first meeting with the ally.

The manipulatory technique for the fourth specific purpose utilized a smoking mixture made of dried mushrooms mixed with different parts of five other plants, none of which was known to have hallucinogenic properties. The rule placed the emphasis on the act of inhaling the smoke from the mixture; the teacher thus used the word *humito* (little smoke) to refer to the ally contained in it. But I have called this process "ingestion-inhalation" because it was a combination of ingesting first and then of inhaling. The mushrooms, because of their softness, dried into a

very fine dust which was rather difficult to burn. The other ingredients turned into shreds upon drying. These shreds were incinerated in the pipe bowl while the mushroom powder, which did not burn so easily, was drawn into the mouth and ingested. Logically, the quantity of dried mushrooms ingested was larger than the quantity of shreds burned and inhaled.

The effects of the first state of nonordinary reality elicited by *Psilocybe mexicana* gave rise to don Juan's brief discussion of the fifth specific purpose of the rule. It was concerned with movement—moving with the help of the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana* into and through inanimate objects or into and through animate beings. The complete manipulatory technique may have included hypnotic suggestion besides the process of ingestion-inhalation. Because don Juan presented this specific purpose only as a brief discussion which was not further verified, it was impossible for me to assess correctly any of its aspects.

The sixth specific purpose of the rule verified in nonordinary reality, also involving the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana,* dealt with another aspect of movement—moving by adopting an alternate form. This aspect of movement was subjected to the most intensive verification. Don Juan asserted that assiduous practice was needed in order to master it. He maintained that the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana* had the inherent capacity to cause the sorcerer's body to disappear; thus the idea of adopting an alternate form was a logical possibility for achieving movement under the conditions of bodilessness. Another logical possibility for achieving movement was, naturally, moving through objects and beings, which don Juan had discussed briefly.

The manipulatory technique of the sixth specific purpose of the rule included not only ingestion-inhalation but also, according to all indications, hypnotic suggestion. Don Juan had put forth such a suggestion during the transitional stages into nonordinary reality, and also during the early part of the states of nonordinary reality. He classified the seemingly hypnotic process as being only his personal supervision, meaning that he had not revealed to me the complete manipulatory technique at that particular time.

The adoption of an alternate form did not mean that a sorcerer was free to take, on the spur of the moment, any form he wanted to take; on the contrary, it implied a lifelong training to achieve a preconceived form. The preconceived form don Juan had preferred to adopt was that of a crow, and consequently he emphasized that particular form in his teachings. He made it very clear, nonetheless, that a crow was his

personal choice, and that there were innumerable other possible preconceived forms.

THE FOURTH UNIT

THE RULE WAS CORROBORATED BY SPECIAL CONSENSUS

Among the component concepts forming the rule, the one that was indispensable for explaining it was the idea that the rule was corroborated by special consensus; all the other component concepts were insufficient by themselves for explaining the meaning of the rule.

Don Juan made it very clear that an ally was not bestowed on a sorcerer, but that a sorcerer learned to manipulate the ally through the process of corroborating its rule. The complete learning process involved verification of the rule in nonordinary reality as well as in ordinary reality. Yet the crucial facet of don Juan's teachings was corroboration of the rule in a pragmatic and experimental manner in the context of what one perceived as being the component elements of nonordinary reality. But those component elements were not subject to ordinary consensus, and if one was incapable of obtaining agreement on their existence, their perceived realness would have been only an illusion. As a man would have to be by himself in nonordinary reality, by reason of his solitariness whatever he perceived would have to be idiosyncratic. The solitariness and the idiosyncrasies were a consequence of the assumed fact that no fellowman could give one ordinary consensus on one's perceptions.

At this point don Juan brought in the most important constituent part of his teachings: he provided me with special consensus on the actions and the elements I had perceived in nonordinary reality, actions and elements that were believed to corroborate the rule. In don Juan's teachings, special consensus meant tacit or implicit agreement on the component elements of nonordinary reality, which he, in his capacity as teacher, gave me as the apprentice of his knowledge. This special consensus was not in any way fraudulent or spurious, such as the one two persons might give each other in describing the component elements of their individual dreams. The special consensus don Juan supplied was systematic, and to provide it he may have needed the totality of his knowledge. With the acquisition of systematic consensus the actions and the elements perceived in nonordinary reality became consensually real, which meant, in don Juan's classificatory scheme, that the rule of the ally had been corroborated. The rule had meaning as a concept, then, only

inasmuch as it was subject to special consensus, for without special agreement about its corroboration the rule would have been a purely idiosyncratic construct.

Because of its indispensability for explaining the rule, I have made the idea that the rule was corroborated by special consensus the fourth main unit of this structural scheme. This unit, because it was basically the interplay between two individuals, was composed of (1) the benefactor, or the guide into the knowledge being taught, the agent who supplied special consensus; (2) the apprentice or the subject for whom special consensus was provided.

Failure or success in achieving the operational goal of the teachings rested on this unit. Thus, special consensus was the precarious culmination of the following process: A sorcerer had a distinctive feature, possession of an ally, which differentiated him from ordinary men. An ally was a power that had the special property of having a rule. And the unique characteristic of the rule was its corroboration in nonordinary reality by means of special consensus.

The Benefactor

The benefactor was the agent without whom the corroboration of the rule would have been impossible. In order to provide special consensus, he performed the two tasks of (1) preparing the background for special consensus on the corroboration of the rule, and (2) guiding special consensus.

Preparing Special Consensus

The benefactor's first task was to set the background necessary for bringing forth special consensus on corroboration of the rule. As my teacher, don Juan made me (1) experience other states of nonordinary reality which he explained as being quite apart from those elicited to corroborate the rule of the allies; (2) participate with him in certain special states of ordinary reality which he seemed to have produced himself; and (3) recapitulate each experience in detail. Don Juan's task of preparing special consensus consisted of strengthening and confirming the corroboration of the rule by giving special consensus on the component elements of these new states of nonordinary reality, and on the component elements of the special states of ordinary reality.

The other states of nonordinary reality which don Juan made me experience were induced by the ingestion of the cactus *Lophophora williamsii,* commonly known as peyote. Usually the top part of the cactus was cut off and stored until it had dried, and then it was chewed and ingested, but under special circumstances the top part was ingested

while it was fresh. Ingestion, however, was not the only way to experience a state of nonordinary reality with *Lophophora williamsii.* Don Juan suggested that spontaneous states of nonordinary reality occurred under unique conditions, and he categorized them as gifts from or bestowals by the power contained in the plant.

Nonordinary reality induced by *Lophophora williamsii* had three distinctive features: (1) it was believed to be produced by an entity called "Mescalito"; (2) it was utilizable; and (3) it had component elements.

Mescalito was purported to be a unique power, similar to an ally in the sense that it allowed one to transcend the boundaries of ordinary reality, but also quite different from an ally. Like an ally, Mescalito was contained in a definite plant, the cactus *Lophophora williamsii.* But unlike an ally, which was merely *contained in* a plant, Mescalito and the plant in which it was contained were the same; the plant was the center of overt manifestations of respect, the recipient of profound veneration. Don Juan firmly believed that under certain conditions, such as a state of profound acquiescence to Mescalito, the simple act of being contiguous to the cactus would induce a state of nonordinary reality.

But Mescalito did not have a rule, and for that reason it was not an ally even though it was capable of transporting a man outside the boundaries of ordinary reality. Not having a rule not only barred Mescalito from being used as an ally, for without a rule it could not conceivably be manipulated, but also made it a power remarkably different from an ally.

As a direct consequence of not having a rule, Mescalito was available to any man without the need of a long apprenticeship or the commitment to manipulatory techniques, as with an ally. And because it was available without any training, Mescalito was said to be a protector. To be a protector meant that it was accessible to anyone. Yet Mescalito as a protector was not accessible to every man, and with some individuals it was not compatible. According to don Juan, such incompatibility was caused by the discrepancy between Mescalito's "unbending morality" and the individual's own questionable character.

Mescalito was also a teacher. It was supposed to exercise didactic functions. It was a director, a guide to proper behavior. Mescalito taught the right way. Don Juan's idea of the right way seemed to be a sense of propriety, which consisted, not of righteousness in terms of morality, but of a tendency to simplify behavioral patterns in terms of the efficacy promoted by his teachings. Don Juan believed Mescalito taught simplification of behavior.

Mescalito was believed to be an entity. And as such it was pur-

ported to have a definite form that was usually not constant or predictable. This quality implied that Mescalito was perceived differently not only by different men, but also by the same man on different occasions. Don Juan expressed this idea in terms of Mescalito's ability to adopt any conceivable form. For individuals with whom it was compatible, however, it adopted an unchanging form after they had partaken of it over a period of years.

The nonordinary reality produced by Mescalito was utilizable, and in this respect was identical with that induced by an ally. The only difference was the rationale don Juan used in his teachings for eliciting it: one was supposed to seek "Mescalito's lessons on the right way."

The nonordinary reality produced by Mescalito also had component elements, and here again the states of nonordinary reality induced by Mescalito and by an ally were identical. In both, the characteristics of the component elements were stability, singularity, and lack of consensus.

The other procedure don Juan used to prepare the background for special consensus was to make me the coparticipant in special states of ordinary reality. A special state of ordinary reality was a situation that could be described in terms of the properties of everyday life, except that it might have been impossible to obtain ordinary consensus on its component elements. Don Juan prepared the background for the special consensus on the corroboration of the rule by giving special consensus on the component elements of the special states of ordinary reality. These component elements were elements of everyday life whose existence could be confirmed only by don Juan through special agreement. This was a supposition on my part, because as coparticipant in the special states of ordinary reality I believed that only don Juan, as the other coparticipant, would know which component elements made up the special state of ordinary reality.

In my own personal judgment, the special states of ordinary reality were produced by don Juan, although he never claimed to have done so. It seemed that he produced them through a skillful manipulation of hints and suggestions to guide my behavior. I have called that process the "manipulation of cues." It had two aspects: (1) cuing about the environment, and (2) cuing about behavior.

During the course of the teachings don Juan made me experience two such states. He may have produced the first through the process of cuing about the environment. Don Juan's rationale for producing it was that I needed a test to prove my good intentions, and only after he had given me special consensus on its component elements did he consent to

begin his teachings. By "cuing about the environment" I meant that don Juan led me into a special state of ordinary reality by isolating, through subtle suggestions, component elements of ordinary reality which were part of the immediate physical surroundings. Elements isolated in such a manner created in this instance a specific visual perception of color, which don Juan tacitly verified.

The second state of ordinary reality may have been produced by the process of cuing about behavior. Don Juan, through close association with me and through the exercise of a consistent way of behaving, had succeeded in creating an image of himself, an image that served me as an essential pattern by which I could recognize him. Then, by performing certain specific choice responses, which were irreconcilable with the image he had created, don Juan was capable of distorting this essential pattern of recognition. The distortion may in turn have changed the normal configuration of elements associated with the pattern into a new and incongruous pattern which could not be subjected to ordinary consensus; don Juan, as the coparticipant of that special state of ordinary reality, was the only person who knew which the component elements were, and thus he was the only person who could give me agreement on their existence.

Don Juan set up the second special state of ordinary reality also as a test, as a sort of recapitulation of his teachings. It seemed that both special states of ordinary reality marked a transition in the teachings. They seemed to be points of articulation. And the second state may have marked my entrance into a new stage of learning characterized by more direct coparticipation between teacher and apprentice for purposes of arriving at special consensus.

The third procedure that don Juan employed to prepare special consensus was to make me render a detailed account of what I had experienced as an aftermath of each state of nonordinary reality and each special state of ordinary reality, and then to stress certain choice units which he isolated from the content of my account. The essential factor was directing the outcome of the states of nonordinary reality, and my implicit assumption here was that the characteristics of the component elements of nonordinary reality—stability, singularity, and lack of ordinary consensus—where inherent in them and were not the result of don Juan's guidance. This assumption was based on the observation that the component elements of the first state of nonordinary reality I underwent possessed the same three characteristics, and yet don Juan had hardly begun his directing. Assuming, then, that these characteristics were inherent in the component elements of nonordinary reality in

general, don Juan's task consisted of utilizing them as the basis for directing the outcome of each state of nonordinary reality elicited by *Datura inoxia, Psilocybe mexicana,* and *Lophophora williamsii.*

The detailed account that don Juan made me render as the aftermath of each state of nonordinary reality was a recapitulation of the experience. It entailed a meticulous verbal rendition of what I had perceived during the course of each state. A recapitulation had two facets: (1) the recollection of events and (2) the description of perceived component elements. The recollection of events was concerned with the incidents I had seemingly perceived during the course of the experience I was narrating: that is, the events that seemed to have happened and the actions I seemed to have performed. The description of the perceived component elements was my account of the specific form and the specific detail of the component elements I seemed to have perceived.

From each recapitulation of the experience don Juan selected certain units by means of the processes of (1) attaching importance to certain appropriate areas of my account and (2) denying all importance to other areas of my account. The interval between states of nonordinary reality was the time when don Juan expounded on the recapitulation of the experience.

I have called the first process "emphasis" because it entailed a forceful speculation on the distinction between what don Juan had conceived as the goals I should have accomplished in the state of nonordinary reality and what I had perceived myself. Emphasis meant, then, that don Juan isolated an area of my narrative by centering on it the bulk of his speculation. Emphasis was either positive or negative. Positive emphasis implied that don Juan was satisfied with a particular item I had perceived because it conformed with the goals he had expected me to achieve in the state of nonordinary reality. Negative emphasis meant that don Juan was not satisfied with what I had perceived because it may not have conformed with his expectations or because he judged it insufficient. Nonetheless, he still placed the bulk of speculation on that area of my recapitulation in order to emphasize the negative value of my perception.

The second selective process that don Juan employed was to deny all importance to some areas of my account. I have called it "lack of emphasis" because it was the opposite and the counterbalance of emphasis. It seemed that by denying importance to the parts of my account pertaining to component elements which don Juan judged to be completely superfluous to the goal of his teachings, he literally obliterated my

perception of the same elements in the successive states of nonordinary reality.

Guiding Special Consensus

The second aspect of don Juan's task as a teacher was to guide special consensus by directing the outcome of each state of nonordinary reality and each special state of ordinary reality. Don Juan directed that outcome through an orderly manipulation of the extrinsic and the intrinsic levels of nonordinary reality, and of the intrinsic level of the special states of ordinary reality.

The extrinsic level of nonordinary reality pertained to its operative arrangement. It involved the mechanics, the steps leading into nonordinary reality proper. The extrinsic level had three discernible aspects: (1) the preparatory period, (2) the transitional stages, and (3) the teacher's supervision.

The preparatory period was the time that elapsed between one state of nonordinary reality and the next. Don Juan used it to give me direct instructions and to develop the general course of his teachings. The preparatory period was of critical importance in setting up the states of nonordinary reality, and because it pivoted on them it had two distinct facets: (1) the period prior to nonordinary reality, and (2) the period following nonordinary reality.

The period prior to nonordinary reality was a relatively short interval of time, twenty-four hours at the most. In the states of nonordinary reality induced by *Datura inoxia* and *Pscilocybe mexicana* the period was characterized by don Juan's dramatic and accelerated direct instructions on the specific purpose of the rule and on the manipulatory techniques I was supposed to corroborate in the oncoming state of nonordinary reality. With *Lophophora williamsii* the period was essentially a time of ritual behavior, since Mescalito had no rule.

The period following nonordinary reality, on the other hand, was a long span of time; usually lasting for months, it allowed time for don Juan's discussion and clarification of the events that had taken place during the preceding state of nonordinary reality. This period was especially important after the use of *Lophophora williamsii*. Because Mescalito did not have a rule, the goal pursued in nonordinary reality was the verification of Mescalito's characteristics; don Juan delineated those characteristics during the long interval following each state of nonordinary reality.

The second aspect of the extrinsic level was the transitional stages, which meant the passage from a state of ordinary reality into a state of

nonordinary reality, and vice versa. The two states of reality overlapped in these transitional stages, and the criterion I used to differentiate the latter from either state of reality was that their component elements were blurred. I was never able to perceive them or to recollect them with precision.

In terms of perceived time, the transitional stages were either abrupt or slow. In the instance of *Datura inoxia,* ordinary and nonordinary states were almost juxtaposed, and the transition from one to the other took place abruptly. The most noticeable were the passages into nonordinary reality. *Psilocybe mexicana,* on the other hand, elicited transitional stages that I perceived to be slow. The passage from ordinary into nonordinary reality was specially long-drawn-out and perceivable. I was always more aware of it, perhaps because of my apprehension about forthcoming events.

The transitional stages elicited by *Lophophora williamsii* seemed to combine features of the other two. For one thing, both the passages into and out of nonordinary reality were very noticeable. The entering into nonordinary reality was slow, and I experienced it with hardly any impairment of my faculties; but reverting back into ordinary reality was an abrupt transitional stage, which I perceived with clarity, but with less facility to assess every detail of it.

The third aspect of the extrinsic level was the teacher's supervision or the actual help that I, as the apprentice, received in the course of experiencing a state of nonordinary reality. I have set up supervision as a category by itself because it was implied that the teacher would have to enter nonordinary reality with his apprentice at a certain point of the teachings.

During the states of nonordinary reality elicited by *Datura inoxia* I received minimal supervision. Don Juan placed heavy stress on fulfilling the steps of the preparatory period, but after I had complied with that requirement he let me proceed by myself.

In the nonordinary reality induced by *Psilocybe mexicana,* the degree of supervision was the complete opposite, for here, according to don Juan, the apprentice needed the most extensive guidance and help. The corroboration of the rule necessitated the adoption of an alternate form, which seemed to suggest that I had to undergo a series of very specialized adjustments in perceiving the surroundings. Don Juan produced those necessary adjustments through verbal commands and suggestions during the transitional stages into nonordinary reality. Another aspect of his supervision was to direct me during the early part of the states of nonordinary reality by commanding me to focus my attention on certain component elements of the preceding state of ordinary

reality. The items he focused upon were apparently chosen at random, as the important issue was the act of perfecting the adopted alternate form. The final aspect of supervision was restoring me back to ordinary reality. It was implicit that this operation also required maximal supervision from don Juan, although I could not recall the actual procedure.

The supervision necessary for the states induced by *Lophophora williamsii* was a blend of the other two. Don Juan remained at my side for as long as he could, yet he did not attempt in any way to direct me into or out of nonordinary reality.

The second level of differentiative order in nonordinary reality was the seemingly internal standards or the seemingly internal arrangement of its component elements. I have called it the "intrinsic level," and I have assumed here that the component elements were subject to three general processes, which seemed to be the product of don Juan's guidance: (1) a progression toward the specific; (2) a progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal; and (3) a progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality.

The progression toward the specific was the apparent advance of the component elements of each successive state of nonordinary reality toward being more precise, more specific. It entailed two separate aspects: (1) a progression toward specific single forms; and (2) a progression toward specific total results.

The progression toward specific single forms implied that the component elements were amorphously familiar in the early states of nonordinary reality, and became specific and unfamiliar in the late states. The progression seemed to encompass two levels of change in the component elements of nonordinary reality: (1) a progressive complexity of perceived detail; and (2) a progression from familiar to unfamiliar forms.

Progressive complexity of detail meant that in each successive state of nonordinary reality, the minute particulars I perceived as constituting the component elements became more complex. I assessed complexity in terms of my being aware that the structure of the component elements grew more complicated, yet the details did not become exceedingly or perplexingly entangled. The increasing complexity referred rather to the harmonious increase of perceived detail, which ranged from my impressions of vague forms during the early states to my perception of massive, elaborate arrays of minute particulars in the late states.

The progression from familiar to unfamiliar forms implied that at first the forms of the component elements either were familiar forms found in ordinary reality, or at least evoked the familiarity of everyday life. But in successive states of nonordinary reality the specific forms, the details making up the form, and the patterns in which the component

elements were combined became progressively unfamiliar, until I could not put them on a par with, nor could they even evoke, in some instances, anything I had ever perceived in ordinary reality.

The progression of the component elements toward specific total results was the gradually closer approximation of the total result I accomplished in each state of nonordinary reality to the total result don Juan sought, in matters of corroborating the rule; that is, nonordinary reality was induced to corroborate the rule, and the corroboration grew more specific in each successive attempt.

The second general process of the intrinsic level of nonordinary reality was the progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal. In other words, it was the gain I perceived in each successive state of nonordinary reality toward the expansion of the area over which I could have exercised my capacity to focus attention. The point in question here was either that there existed a definite area that expanded, or that my capacity to perceive seemed to increase in each successive state. Don Juan's teachings fostered and reinforced the idea that there was an area that expanded, and I have called that alleged area the "range of appraisal." Its progressive expansion consisted of a seemingly sensorial appraisal I made of the component elements of nonordinary reality which fell within a certain range. I evaluated and analyzed these component elements, it seemed, with my senses, and to all appearances I perceived the range in which they occurred as being more extensive, more encompassing, in each successive state.

The range of appraisal was of two kinds: (1) the dependent range and (2) the independent range. The dependent range was an area in which the component elements were the items of the physical environment which had been within my awareness in the preceding state of ordinary reality. The independent range, on the other hand, was the area in which the component elements of nonordinary reality seemed to come into existence by themselves, free of the influence of the physical surroundings of the preceding ordinary reality.

Don Juan's clear allusion in matters of the range of appraisal was that each of the two allies and Mescalito possessed the property of inducing both forms of perception. Yet it seemed to me that *Datura inoxia* had a greater capacity to induce an independent range, although in the facet of bodily flight, which I did not perceive long enough to assess it, the range of appraisal was implicitly a dependent one. *Psilocybe mexicana* had the capacity to produce a dependent range; *Lophophora williamsii* had the capacity to produce both.

My assumption was that don Juan used those different properties in order to prepare special consensus. In other words, in the states pro-

duced by *Datura inoxia* the component elements lacking ordinary consensus existed independently of the preceding ordinary reality. With *Psilocybe mexicana,* lack of ordinary consensus involved component elements that depended on the environment of the preceding ordinary reality. And with *Lophophora williamsii,* some component elements were determined by the environment, whereas others were independent of the environment. Thus the use of the three plants together seemed to have been designed to create a broad perception of the lack of ordinary consensus on the component elements of nonordinary reality.

The last process of the intrinsic level of nonordinary reality was the progression I perceived in each successive state toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality. This progression seemed to be correlated with the idea that each new state was a more complex stage of learning, and that the increasing complexity of each new stage required a more inclusive and pragmatic use of nonordinary reality. The progression was most noticeable when *Lophophora williamsii* was used; the simultaneous existence of a dependent and an independent range of appraisal in each state made the pragmatic use of nonordinary reality more extensive, for it covered both ranges at once.

Directing the outcome of the special states of ordinary reality seemed to produce an order in the intrinsic level, an order characterized by the progression of the component elements toward the specific; that is to say, the component elements were more numerous and were isolated more easily in each successive special state of ordinary reality. In the course of his teachings, don Juan elicited only two of them, but it was still possible for me to detect that in the second it was easier for don Juan to isolate a large number of component elements, and that facility for specific results affected the rapidity with which the second special state of ordinary reality was produced.*

THE CONCEPTUAL ORDER

THE APPRENTICE

The apprentice was the last unit of the operative order. The apprentice was in his own right the unit that brought don Juan's teachings into focus, for he had to accept the totality of the special consensus given on the component elements of all the states of nonordinary reality and all the special states of ordinary reality, before special consensus could become a meaningful concept. But special consensus, by force of being concerned with the actions and elements perceived in nonordinary real-

* For the process of validating special consensus, see Appendix A.

ity, entailed a peculiar order of conceptualization, an order that brought such perceived actions and elements into accordance with corroboration of the rule. Therefore the acceptance of special consensus meant for me, as the apprentice, the adoption of a certain point of view validated by the totality of don Juan's teachings; that is, it meant my entrance into a conceptual level, a level comprising an order of conceptualization that would render the teachings understandable in their own terms. I have called it the "conceptual order" because it was the order that gave meaning to the unordinary phenomena that formed don Juan's knowledge; it was the matrix of meaning in which all individual concepts brought out in his teachings were embedded.

Taking into account, then, that the apprentice's goal consisted of adopting that order of conceptualization, he had two alternatives: he could either fail in his efforts or he could succeed.

The first alternative, failure to adopt the conceptual order, meant also that the apprentice had failed to achieve the operational goal of the teachings. The idea of failure was explained in the theme of the four symbolic enemies of a man of knowledge; it was implicit that failure was not merely the act of discontinuing pursuit of the goal, but the act of abandoning the quest completely under the pressure created by any one of the four symbolic enemies. The same theme also made it clear that the first two enemies—fear and clarity—were the cause of a man's defeat at the apprentice's level, that defeat at that level signified failure to learn how to command an ally, and that as a consequence of such failure the apprentice had adopted the conceptual order in a shallow, fallacious manner. That is, his adoption of the conceptual order was fallacious in the sense of being a fraudulent affiliation with or commitment to the meaning propounded by the teachings. The idea was that upon being defeated an apprentice, besides being incapable of commanding an ally, would be left with only the knowledge of certain manipulatory techniques, plus the memory of the perceived component elements of nonordinary reality, but he would not identify with the rationale that might have made them meaningful in their own terms. Under these circumstances any man might be forced to develop his own explanations for idiosyncratically chosen areas of the phenomena he had experienced, and that process would entail the fallacious adoption of the point of view propounded by don Juan's teachings. Fallacious adoption of the conceptual order, however, was apparently not restricted to the apprentice alone. In the theme of the enemies of a man of knowledge, it was also implicit that a man, after having achieved the goal of learning to command an ally, could still succumb to the onslaughts of his other two enemies—power and old age. In don Juan's categorization scheme, such

a defeat implied that a man had fallen into a shallow or fallacious adoption of the conceptual order, as had the defeated apprentice.

The successful adoption of the conceptual order, on the other hand, meant that the apprentice had achieved the operational goal—a bona fide adoption of the point of view propounded in the teachings. That is, his adoption of the conceptual order was bona fide in that it was a complete affiliation with, a complete commitment to, the meaning expressed in that order of conceptualization.

Don Juan never clarified the exact point at which, or the exact way in which, an apprentice ceased to be an apprentice, although the allusion was clear that once he had achieved the operational goal of the system—that is, once he knew how to command an ally—he would no longer need the teacher for guidance. The idea that the time would come when a teacher's directions would be superfluous implied that the apprentice would succeed in adopting the conceptual order, and in so doing he would acquire the capacity to draw meaningful inferences without the teacher's aid.

Insofar as don Juan's teachings were concerned, and until I discontinued my apprenticeship, the acceptance of special consensus seemed to entail the adoption of two units of the conceptual order: (1) the idea of a reality of special consensus; (2) the idea that the reality of ordinary, everyday-life consensus, and the reality of special consensus, had an equally pragmatic value.

Reality of Special Consensus

The main body of don Juan's teachings, as he himself stated, concerned the use of the three hallucinogenic plants with which he induced states of nonordinary reality. The use of these three plants seems to have been a matter of deliberate intent on his part. He seems to have employed them because each of them possessed different hallucinogenic properties, which he interpreted as the different inherent natures of the powers contained in them. By directing the extrinsic and intrinsic levels of nonordinary reality, don Juan exploited the different hallucinogenic properties until they created in me, as the apprentice, the perception that nonordinary reality was a perfectly defined area, a realm separate from ordinary, everyday life whose inherent properties were revealed as I went along.

Nevertheless, it was also possible that the allegedly different properties might have been merely the product of don Juan's own process of directing the intrinsic order of nonordinary reality, although in his teachings he exploited the idea that the power contained in each plant induced states of nonordinary reality which differed from one another. If

the latter was true, their differences in terms of the units of this analysis seem to have been in the range of appraisal which one could perceive in the states elicited by each of the three. Owing to the peculiarities of their range of appraisal, all three contributed to producing the perception of a perfectly defined area or realm, consisting of two compartments: the independent range, called the realm of the lizards, or of Mescalito's lessons; and the dependent range, referred to as the area where one could move by one's own means.

I use the term "nonordinary reality," as already noted, in the sense of extraordinary, uncommon reality. For a beginner apprentice such a reality was by all means unordinary, but the apprenticeship of don Juan's knowledge demanded my compulsory participation and my commitment to pragmatic and experimental practice of whatever I had learned. That meant that I, as the apprentice, had to experience a number of states of nonordinary reality, and that firsthand knowledge would, sooner or later, make the classifications "ordinary" and "nonordinary" meaningless for me. The bona fide adoption of the first unit of the conceptual order would have entailed, then, the idea that there was another separate, but no longer unordinary, realm of reality, the "reality of special consensus."

Accepting as a major premise that the reality of special consensus was a separate realm would have explained meaningfully the idea that the meetings with the allies or with Mescalito took place in a realm that was not illusory.

The Reality of Special Consensus Had Pragmatic Value

The same process of directing the extrinsic and intrinsic levels of nonordinary reality, which seemed to have created the recognition of the reality of special consensus as a separate realm, appeared also to have been responsible for my perception that the reality of special consensus was practical and usable. The acceptance of special consensus on all the states of nonordinary reality, and on all the special states of ordinary reality, was designed to consolidate the awareness that it was equal to the reality of ordinary, everyday-life consensus. This equality was based on the impression that the reality of special consensus was not a realm that could be equated with dreams. On the contrary, it had stable component elements that were subject to special agreement. It was actually a realm where one could perceive the surroundings in a deliberate manner. Its component elements were not idiosyncratic or whimsical, but concise items or events whose existence was attested to by the whole body of teachings.

The implication of the equality was clear in the treatment don Juan accorded to the reality of special consensus, a treatment that was utilitarian and matter of course; not at any time did he refer to it, nor was I required to behave toward it in any but a utilitarian, matter-of-course way. The fact that the two areas were considered equal, however, did not mean that at any moment one could have behaved in exactly the same way in either area. On the contrary, a sorcerer's behavior had to be different since each area of reality had qualities that rendered it utilizable in its own way. The defining factor in terms of meaning seems to have been the idea that such an equality could be measured on the grounds of practical utility. Thus, a sorcerer had to believe that it was possible to shift back and forth from one area to the other, that both were inherently utilizable, and that the only dissimilarity between the two was their different capacity for being used, that is, the different purposes they served.

Yet their separateness seemed to be only an appropriate arrangement that was pertinent to my particular level of apprenticeship, which don Juan used for making me aware that another realm of reality could exist. But from his acts, more than from his statements, I was led to believe that for a sorcerer there was but one single continuum of reality which had two, or perhaps more than two, parts from which he drew inferences of pragmatic value. The bona fide adoption of the idea that the reality of special consensus had pragmatic value would have given a meaningful perspective to movement.

If I had accepted the idea that the reality of special consensus was usable because it possessed inherently utilizable properties which were as pragmatic as those of the reality of everday consensus, then it would have been logical for me to understand why don Juan exploited the notion of movement in the reality of special consensus at such great length. After accepting the pragmatic existence of another reality, the only thing a sorcerer had to do would be to learn the mechanics of movement. Naturally, movement in that instance had to be specialized because it was concerned with the inherent, pragmatic properties of the reality of special consensus.

SUMMARY

The issues of my analysis have been the following:

1. The fragment of don Juan's teachings which I have presented here consisted of two aspects: the operative order or the meaningful

sequence in which all the individual concepts of his teachings were linked to one another, and the conceptual order or the matrix of meaning in which all the individual concepts of his teaching were embedded.

2. The operative order had four main units with their respective component ideas: (1) the concept "man of knowledge"; (2) the idea that a man of knowledge had the aid of a specialized power called an ally; (3) the idea that an ally was governed by a body of regulations called the rule; and (4) the idea that the corroboration of the rule was subject to special consensus.

3. These four units were related to one another in the following manner: the goal of the operative order was to teach one how to become a man of knowledge; a man of knowledge was different from ordinary men because he had an ally; an ally was a specialized power, which had a rule; one could acquire or tame an ally through the process of verifying its rule in the realm of nonordinary reality and through obtaining special consensus on that corroboration.

4. In the context of don Juan's teachings, becoming a man of knowledge was not a permanent accomplishment, but rather a process. That is to say, the factor that made a man of knowledge was not solely the possession of an ally, but the man's lifelong struggle to maintain himself within the boundaries of a system of beliefs. Don Juan's teachings, however, were aimed at practical results, and his practical goal, in relation to teaching how to become a man of knowledge, was to teach how to acquire an ally through learning its rule. Thus the goal of the operative order was to provide one with special consensus on the component elements perceived in nonordinary reality, which were considered to be the corroboration of the ally's rule.

5. In order to provide special consensus on the corroboration of the ally's rule, don Juan had to provide special consensus on the component elements of all the states of nonordinary reality and the special states of ordinary reality elicited in the course of his teachings. Special consensus, therefore, dealt with unordinary phenomena, a fact that permitted me to assume that any apprentice, by accepting special consensus, was led into adopting the conceptual order of the knowledge being taught.

6. From the point of view of my personal stage of learning, I could deduce that up to the time when I withdrew from the apprenticeship don Juan's teachings had fostered the adoption of two units of the conceptual order: (1) the idea that there was a separate realm of reality, another world, which I have called the "reality of special consensus"; (2) the idea that the reality of special consensus, or that other world, was as utilizable as the world of everyday life.

Nearly six years after I had begun the apprenticeship, don Juan's knowledge became a coherent whole for the first time. I realized that he had aimed at providing a bona fide consensus on my personal findings, and although I did not continue because I was not, nor will I ever be, prepared to undergo the rigors of such a training, my own way to meet his standards of personal exertion was my attempt to understand his teachings. I felt it was imperative to prove, if only to myself, that they were not an oddity.

After I had arranged my structural scheme, and was capable of discarding many data that were superfluous to my initial effort of uncovering the cogency of his teachings, it became clear to me that they had an internal cohesion, a logical sequence that enabled me to view the entire phenomenon in a light that dispelled the sense of bizarreness which was the mark of all I had experienced. It was obvious to me then that my apprenticeship had been only the beginning of a very long road. And the strenuous experiences I had undergone, which were so overwhelming to me, were but a very small fragment of a system of logical thought from which don Juan drew meaningful inferences for his day-to-day life, a vastly complex system of beliefs in which inquiry was an experience leading to exultation.

Appendix A

THE PROCESS OF VALIDATING SPECIAL CONSENSUS

Validating special consensus involved, at every point, the cumulation of don Juan's teachings. For the purpose of explaining the cumulative process, I have arranged the validation of special consensus according to the sequence in which the states of nonordinary reality and special ordinary reality occurred. Don Juan did not seem to have fixed the process of directing the intrinsic order of nonordinary and special ordinary reality in an exact manner; he seemed to have isolated the units for direction in a rather fluid way.

Don Juan began to prepare the background for special consensus by producing the first special state of ordinary reality through the process of manipulating cues about the environment. He isolated by that method certain component elements from the range of ordinary reality, and by isolating them, he directed me to perceive a progression toward the specific, in this instance the perception of colors that seemed to emanate from two small areas on the ground. Upon being isolated those areas of coloration became deprived of ordinary consensus; it seemed that only I was capable of seeing them, and thus they created a special state of ordinary reality.

Isolating those two areas on the ground by depriving them of ordinary consensus served to establish the first link between ordinary and nonordinary reality. Don Juan directed me to perceive a portion of ordinary reality in an unaccustomed manner; that is, he changed certain ordinary elements into items that needed special consensus.

The aftermath of the first special state of ordinary reality was my recapitulation of the experience; from it don Juan selected the perception of different areas of coloration as the units for positive emphasis. He isolated for negative emphasis the account of my fear and fatigue, and the possibility of my lacking persistence.

During the subsequent preparatory period he placed the bulk of speculation on the units he had isolated, and he carried over the idea that is was possible to detect in the surroundings more than the usual.

From the units drawn from my recapitulation don Juan also introduced some of the component concepts of man of knowledge.

As the second step in preparing special consensus on the corroboration of the rule, don Juan induced a state of nonordinary reality with *Lophophora williamsii*. The total content of that first state of nonordinary reality was rather vague and disassociated, yet the component elements were very well defined; I perceived its characteristics of stability, singularity, and lack of ordinary consensus almost as clearly as in later states. These characteristics were not so obvious, perhaps because of my lack of proficiency; it was the first time I had experienced nonordinary reality.

It was impossible to ascertain the effect of don Juan's previous directing on the actual course of the experience; however, his mastery in directing the outcome of subsequent states of nonordinary reality was very clear from that point on.

From my recapitulation of the experience, he selected the units to direct the progression toward specific single forms and specific total results. He took the account of my actions with a dog and connected it with the idea that Mescalito was a visible entity. It was capable of adopting any form; above all it was an entity outside oneself.

The account of my actions also served don Juan in setting the progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal; in this instance the progression was toward a dependent range. Don Juan placed positive emphasis on the notion that I had moved and acted in nonordinary reality almost as I would have in everyday life.

The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was set by giving negative emphasis to the account of my incapacity to pay logical attention to the perceived component elements. Don Juan hinted that it would have been possible for me to examine the elements with detachment and accuracy; this idea brought forth two general characteristics of nonordinary reality, that it was pragmatic and that it had component elements that could be assessed sensorially.

The lack of ordinary consensus for the component elements was bought forth dramatically by an interplay of positive and negative emphasis placed on the views of onlookers who observed my behavior during the course of that first state of nonordinary reality.

The preparatory period following the first state of nonordinary reality lasted more than a year. Don Juan employed that time to introduce more component concepts of man of knowledge, and to disclose some parts of the rule of the two allies. He elicited also a shallow state of nonordinary reality in order to test my affinity with the ally contained in *Datura inoxia*. Don Juan used whatever vague sensations I had in the

course of that shallow state to delineate the general characteristics of the ally by contrasting it with what he had isolated as Mescalito's perceivable characteristics.

The third step in preparing the special consensus on the corroboration of the rule was to elicit another state of nonordinary reality with *Lophophora williamsii.* Don Juan's previous directing seems to have guided me to perceiving this second state of nonordinary reality in the following manner:

The progression toward the specific created the possibility of visualizing an entity whose form had changed remarkably, from the familiar shape of a dog in the first state to the completely unfamiliar form of an anthropomorphic composite that existed, seemingly, outside myself.

The progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal was evident in my perception of a journey. In the course of that journey the range of appraisal was both dependent and independent, although a majority of the component elements depended on the environment of the preceding state of ordinary reality.

The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was, perhaps, the most outstanding feature of my second state. It became evident to me, in a complex and detailed manner, that one could move around in nonordinary reality.

I also examined the component elements with detachment and accuracy. I perceived their stability, singularity, and lack of consensus very clearly.

From my recapitulation of the experience, don Juan emphasized the following: For the progression toward the specific he gave positive emphasis to my account that I had seen Mescalito as an anthropomorphic composite. The bulk of speculation on this area was centered on the idea that Mescalito was capable of being a teacher, and also a protector.

In order to direct the progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal, don Juan placed positive emphasis on the account of my journey, which obviously had taken place in the dependent range; he also put positive emphasis on my version of the visionary scenes I viewed on the hand of Mescalito, scenes that seemed to be independent of the component elements of the preceding ordinary reality.

The account of my journey, and the scenes viewed on Mescalito's hand, also enabled don Juan to direct the progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality. He first put forth the idea that it was possible to obtain direction; second, he interpreted the scenes as lessons concerning the right way to live.

Some areas of my recapitulation which dealt with the perception of

superfluous composites were not emphasized at all, because they were not useful for setting the direction of the intrinsic order.

The next state of nonordinary reality, the third one, was induced for the corroboration of the rule with the ally contained in *Datura inoxia*. The preparatory period was important and noticeable for the first time. Don Juan presented the manipulatory techniques and disclosed that the specific purpose I had to corroborate was divination.

His previous directing of the three aspects of the intrinsic order seemed to have produced the following results: The progression toward the specific was manifested in my capacity to perceive an ally as a quality; that is, I verified the assertion that an ally was not visible at all. The progression toward the specific also produced the peculiar perception of a series of images very similar to those I had viewed on Mescalito's hand. Don Juan interpreted these scenes as divination, or the corroboration of the specific purpose of the rule.

Perceiving that series of scenes entailed also a progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal. This time the range was independent of the environment of the preceding ordinary reality. The scenes did not appear to be superimposed on the component elements, as had the images I viewed on Mescalito's hand; in fact, there were no other component elements besides those that were part of the scenes. In other words, the total range of appraisal was independent.

The perception of a completely independent range also exhibited progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality. Divining implied that one could give a utilitarian value to whatever had been seen.

For the purpose of directing the progression toward the specific, don Juan put positive emphasis on the idea that it was impossible to move by one's own means in the independent range of appraisal. He explained movement there as being indirect, and as being accomplished, in this particular instance, by the lizards as instruments. In order to set the direction of the second aspect of the intrinsic level, the progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal, he centered the bulk of speculation on the idea that the scenes I had perceived, which were the answers to divination, could have been examined and extended for as long as I wanted. For guiding the progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality, don Juan placed positive emphasis on the idea that the topic to be divined had to be simple and direct in order to obtain a result that could be usable.

The fourth state of nonordinary reality was elicited also for the corroboration of the rule of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia*. The

specific purpose of the rule to be corroborated had to do with bodily flight as another aspect of movement.

A result of directing the progression toward the specific may have been the perception of soaring bodily through the air. That sensation was acute, although it lacked the depth of all the earlier perceptions of acts that I had presumably performed in nonordinary reality. Bodily flight appeared to have taken place in a dependent range of appraisal, and it appeared to have entailed moving by one's own power, which may have been the result of a progression toward a wider range of appraisal.

Two other aspects of the sensation of soaring through the air may have been the product of directing the progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality. They were, first, the perception of distance, a perception that created the feeling of an actual flight, and second, the possibility of acquiring direction in the course of that alleged movement.

During the subsequent preparatory period don Juan speculated on the supposedly deleterious nature of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia.* And he isolated the following areas of my account: For directing the progression toward the specific, he placed positive emphasis on my recollection of having soared through the air. Although I did not perceive the component elements of that state of nonordinary reality with the clarity that was customary by then, my sensation of movement was very definite, and don Juan used it to reinforce the specific result of movement. The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was established by centering the bulk of speculation on the idea that sorcerers could fly over enormous distances, a speculation that gave rise to the possibility that one could move in the dependent range of appraisal and then switch such movement over into ordinary reality.

The fifth state of nonordinary reality was produced by the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana.* It was the first time that the plant was used, and the state that ensued was more in line with a test than with an attempt to corroborate the rule. In the preparatory period don Juan presented only a manipulatory technique; as he did not disclose the specific purpose to be verified I did not believe the state was elicited to corroborate the rule. Yet the direction of the intrinsic level of nonordinary reality set earlier appeared to have terminated in the following results.

Directing the progression toward specific total results produced in me the perception that the two allies were different from each other, and that each was different from Mescalito. I perceived the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana* as a quality—formless and invisible, and producing

a sensation of bodilessness. The progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal resulted in the sensation that the total environment of the preceding ordinary reality, which remained within my awareness, was usable in nonordinary reality; that is, the expansion of the dependent range seemed to have covered everything. The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality produced the peculiar perception that I could go through the component elements within the dependent range of appraisal, in spite of the fact that they appeared to be ordinary elements of everyday life.

Don Juan did not demand the usual recapitulation of the experience; it was as if the absence of a specific purpose had made this state of nonordinary reality only a prolonged transitional stage. During the subsequent preparatory period, however, he speculated on certain observations he had made on my behavior during the course of the experience.

He placed negative emphasis on the logical impasse that prevented my believing that one could go through things or beings. With that speculation he directed the progression toward a specific total result of movement through the component elements of nonordinary reality perceived within the dependent range of appraisal.

Don Juan used those same observations to direct the second aspect of the intrinsic level, a more extensive range of appraisal. If movement through things and beings was possible, then the dependent range had to expand accordingly; it had to cover the total environment of the preceding ordinary reality which was within one's awareness at any given time, since movement entailed a constant change of surroundings. In the same speculation it was also implicit that nonordinary reality could have been used in a more pragmatic manner. Moving through objects and beings implied a definite point of advantage which was inaccessible to a sorcerer in ordinary reality.

Don Juan next used a series of three states of nonordinary reality, elicited by *Lophophora williamsii,* to prepare further the special consensus on the corroboration of the rule. These three states have here been treated as a single unit because they took place during four consecutive days, and during the few hours in between them I had no communication whatsoever with don Juan. The intrinsic order of the three states has also been considered a single unit with the following characteristics. The progression toward the specific produced the perception of Mescalito as a visible, anthropomorphic entity capable of teaching. The ability to give lessons implied that Mescalito was capable of acting toward people.

The progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal reached a point where I perceived both ranges at the same time, and I was incapable of establishing the difference between them except in

terms of movement. In the dependent range it was possible for me to move by my own means and volition, but in the independent range I was able to move only with the aid of Mescalito as an instrument. For example, Mescalito's lessons comprised a series of scenes that I could only watch. The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was implicit in the idea that Mescalito could actually deliver lessons on the right way to live.

During the preparatory period that followed the last state of nonordinary reality in this series, don Juan selected the following units. For the progression toward the specific, he placed positive emphasis on the ideas that Mescalito was instrumental in moving one through the independent range of appraisal, and that Mescalito was a didactic entity capable of delivering lessons by allowing one to enter into a visionary world. He also speculated on the implication that Mescalito had voiced its name and had supposedly taught me some songs; those two instances were constructed as examples of Mescalito's capacity to be a protector. And the fact that I had perceived Mescalito as a light was emphasized as the possibility that it might at last have adopted an abstract, permanent form for me.

Stressing these same units also served don Juan in directing the progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal. During the course of the three states of nonordinary reality I clearly perceived that the dependent range and the independent range were two separate aspects of nonordinary reality which were equally important. The independent range was the area where Mescalito delivered its lessons, and since these states of nonordinary reality were supposed to have been elicited only to seek such lessons, the independent range was, logically, an area of special importance. Mescalito was a protector and a teacher, which meant that it was visible; yet its form had nothing to do with the preceding state of ordinary reality. On the other hand, one was supposed to journey, to move in nonordinary reality, in order to seek Mescalito's lessons, an idea that implied the importance of the dependent range.

The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was set by devoting the bulk of speculation to Mescalito's lessons. Don Juan constructed these lessons as being indispensable to a man's life; it was a clear inference that nonordinary reality could have been used in a more pragmatic manner to draw points of reference which had value in ordinary reality. It was the first time don Juan had verbalized such an implication.

The subsequent state of nonordinary reality, the ninth in the teachings, was induced in order to corroborate the rule of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia.* The specific purpose to be corroborated in that state was

concerned with divination, and the previous direction of the intrinsic level ended in the following points. The progression toward a specific total result created the perception of a coherent set of scenes, which were purported to be the voice of the lizard narrating the events to be divined, and the sensation of a voice that actually described such scenes. The progression toward an independent range of appraisal resulted in the perception of an extensive and clear independent range that was free from the extraneous influence of ordinary reality. The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality ended in the utilitarian possibilities of exploiting the independent range. That particular trend was set up by don Juan's speculation on the possibility of drawing points of reference from the independent range and using them in ordinary reality. Thus the divinatory scenes had an obvious pragmatic value, for they were thought to represent a view of acts performed by others, acts to which one would have had no access by ordinary means.

In the following preparatory period, don Juan emphasized more of the component themes of man of knowledge. He seemed to be getting ready to shift to the pursuit of only one of the two allies, the ally humito. Yet he gave positive emphasis to the idea that I had a close affinity with the ally contained in *Datura inoxia,* because it had allowed me to witness an incidence of flexibility of the rule when I had made an error in performing a manipulatory technique. My assumption that don Juan was ready to abandon teaching the rule of the ally contained in *Datura inoxia* was fostered by the fact that he did not isolate any areas of my recapitulation of the experience to account for directing the intrinsic level of the subsequent states of nonordinary reality.

Next was a series of three states of nonordinary reality elicited to corroborate the rule of the ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana.* They have been treated here as a single unit. And although a considerable time elapsed in between them, during those intervals don Juan made no attempt to speculate on any aspect of their intrinsic order.

The first state of the series was vague; it ended rapidly and its component elements were not precise. It had the appearance of being more like a transitional stage than like a state of nonordinary reality proper.

The second state had more depth. I perceived the transitional stage into nonordinary reality separately for the first time. During the course of that first transitional stage don Juan revealed that the specific purpose of the rule, which I had to corroborate, dealt with another aspect of movement, an aspect requiring his exhaustive supervision; I have rendered it as "moving by adopting an alternate form." As a consequence,

two aspects of the extrinsic level of nonordinary reality became evident for the first time: the transitional stages, and the teacher's supervision.

Don Juan used his supervision during that first transitional stage to pinpoint the subsequent direction of the three aspects of the intrinsic level. His efforts were channeled, in the first place, to produce a specific total result by guiding me to experience the precise sensation of having adopted the shape of a crow.

The possibility of adopting an alternate form in order to achieve movement in nonordinary reality entailed in turn an expansion of the dependent range of appraisal, the only area where such movement could take place.

The pragmatic use of nonordinary reality was determined by directing me to focus my attention on certain component elements of the dependent range, in order to use them as points of reference for moving.

During the preparatory period that followed the second state of the series, don Juan refused to speculate on any part of my experience. He treated the second state as if it had been merely another prolonged transitional stage.

The third state of the series, however, was paramount in the teachings. It was a state in which the process of directing the intrinsic level culminated in the following results: The progression toward the specific created the easy perception that I had adopted an alternative form so completely that it even induced precise adjustments in the way I focused my eyes and in my way of seeing. A result of those adjustments was my perception of a new facet of the dependent range of appraisal—the minutiae that formed the component elements—and that perception definitely enlarged the range of appraisal. The progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality culminated in my awareness that it was possible to move in the dependent range as pragmatically as one walks in ordinary reality.

In the preparatory period following the last state of nonordinary reality, don Juan introduced a different type of recapitulation. He selected the areas for recollection before he had heard my account; that is, he demanded to hear only the accounts that pertained to the pragmatic use of nonordinary reality and to movement.

From such accounts he set the progression toward the specific by giving positive emphasis to the version of how I had exploited the crow's form. Yet he attached importance only to the idea of moving after having adopted that form. Movement was the area of my recapitulation on which he placed an interplay of positive and negative emphasis. He gave the account positive emphasis when it enhanced the idea of the

pragmatic nature of nonordinary reality, or when it dealt with the perception of component elements which had permitted me to obtain a general sense of orientation, while seemingly moving in the dependent range of appraisal. He placed negative emphasis on my incapacity to recollect with precision the nature or the direction of such movement.

In directing the progression toward a wider range of appraisal, don Juan centered his speculation on my account of the peculiar way in which I had perceived the minutiae that formed the component elements that were within the dependent range. His speculation led me to the assumption that, if it were possible to see the world as a crow does, the dependent range of appraisal had to expand in depth and had to extend to cover the whole spectrum of ordinary reality.

To direct the progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality, don Juan explained my peculiar way of perceiving the component elements as being a crow's way of seeing the world. And, logically, that way of seeing presupposed entrance into a range of phenomena beyond normal possibilities in ordinary reality.

The last experience recorded in my field notes was a special state of ordinary reality; don Juan produced it by isolating component elements of ordinary reality through the process of cuing about his own behavior.

The general processes used in directing the intrinsic level of nonordinary reality produced the following results during the course of the second special state of ordinary reality. The progression toward the specific resulted in the easy isolation of many elements of ordinary reality. In the first special state of ordinary reality, the very few component elements that were isolated through the process of cuing about the environment were also transformed into unfamiliar forms deprived of ordinary consensus; however, in the second special state of ordinary reality its component elements were numerous, and, although they did not lose their quality of being familiar elements, they may have lost their capacity for ordinary consensus. Such component elements covered, perhaps, the total environment that was within my awareness.

Don Juan may have produced this second special state in order to strengthen the link between ordinary and nonordinary reality by developing the possibility that most, if not all, of the component elements of ordinary reality could lose their capacity to have ordinary consensus.

From my own point of view, however, that last special state was the final summation of my apprenticeship. The formidable impact of terror on the level of sober consciousness had the peculiar quality of undermining the certainty that the reality of everyday life was implicitly real, the certainty that I, in matters of ordinary reality, could provide myself with consensus indefinitely. Up to that point the course of my apprenticeship

seemed to have been a continuous building toward the collapse of that certainty. Don Juan used every facet of his dramatic exertion to accomplish the collapse during that last special state, a fact prompting me to believe that complete collapse of that certainty would have removed the last barrier that kept me from accepting the existence of a separate reality: the reality of special consensus.

Appendix B

OUTLINE FOR STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

THE OPERATIVE ORDER

THE FIRST UNIT

MAN OF KNOWLEDGE

- TO BECOME A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE WAS A MATTER OF LEARNING
  - There were no overt requirements
  - There were some covert requirements
  - An apprentice was selected by an impersonal power
    - The one that was chosen (*escogido*)
    - The power's decisions were indicated through omens
- A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE HAD UNBENDING INTENT
  - Frugality
  - Soundness of judgment
  - Lack of freedom to innovate
- A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE HAD CLARITY OF MIND
  - Freedom to seek a path
  - Knowledge of the specific purpose
  - Being fluid
- TO BECOME A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE WAS A MATTER OF STRENUOUS LABOR
  - Dramatic exertion
  - Efficacy
  - Challenge
- A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE WAS A WARRIOR
  - He had to have respect
  - He had to have fear
  - He had to be wide-awake
    - Awareness of intent
    - Awareness of the expected flux
  - He had to be self-confident

To Become a Man of Knowledge Was an Unceasing Process
He had to renew the quest of becoming a man of knowledge
He was impermanent
He had to follow the path with heart

THE SECOND UNIT
A Man of Knowledge Had an Ally
An Ally Was Formless
An Ally Was Perceived as a Quality
The ally contained in *Datura inoxia*
It was woman-like
It was possessive
It was violent
It was unpredictable
It had a deleterious effect on the character of its followers
It was a giver of superfluous power
The ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana*
It was male-like
It was dispassionate
It was gentle
It was predictable
It was beneficial to the character of its followers
It was a giver of ecstasy
An Ally Was Tamable
An ally was a vehicle
The ally contained in *Datura inoxia* was unpredictable
The ally contained in *Psilocybe mexicana* was predictable
An ally was a helper

THE THIRD UNIT
An Ally Had a Rule
The Rule Was Inflexible
Exception due to ally's direct intervention
The Rule Was Noncumulative
The Rule Was Corroborated in Ordinary Reality
The Rule Was Corroborated in Nonordinary Reality
The states of nonordinary reality
Nonordinary reality was utilizable
Nonordinary reality had component elements
The component elements had stability
They had singularity
They lacked ordinary consensus

The specific purposes of the rule
First specific purpose, testing (*Datura inoxia*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion
Second specific purpose, divination (*Datura inoxia*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion-absorption
Third specific purpose, bodily flight (*Datura inoxia*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion-absorption
Fourth specific purpose, testing (*Psilocybe mexicana*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion-inhalation
Fifth specific purpose, movement (*Psilocybe mexicana*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion-inhalation
Sixth specific purpose, movement by adopting an alternate form (*Psilocybe mexicana*)
Manipulatory technique, ingestion-inhalation

THE FOURTH UNIT
THE RULE WAS CORROBORATED BY SPECIAL CONSENSUS
THE BENEFACTOR
Preparing special consensus
The other states of nonordinary reality
They were produced by Mescalito
It was contained
The container was the power itself
It did not have a rule
It did not need apprenticeship
It was a protector
It was a teacher
It had a definite form
Nonordinary reality was utilizable
Nonordinary reality had component elements
The special states of ordinary reality
They were produced by the teacher
Cuing about the environment
Cuing about behavior
The recapitulation of the experience
The recollection of events
The description of the component elements
Emphasis
Positive emphasis
Negative emphasis
Lack of emphasis
Guiding special consensus

The extrinsic level of nonordinary reality
The preparatory period
The period prior to nonordinary reality
The period following nonordinary reality
The transitional stages
The teacher's supervision
The intrinsic level of nonordinary reality
Progression toward the specific
Specific single forms
Progressive complexity of perceived detail
Progression from familiar to unfamiliar forms
Specific total results
Progression toward a more extensive range of appraisal
Dependent range
Independent range
Progression toward a more pragmatic use of nonordinary reality
Progression toward the specific in special states of ordinary reality

THE CONCEPTUAL ORDER

The Apprentice
The fallacious adoption of the conceptual order
The bona fide adoption of the conceptual order
Reality of special consensus
The reality of special consensus had pragmatic value

A Separate Reality

Further Conversations with Don Juan

Contents

INTRODUCTION
page 201

PART ONE
The Preliminaries of "Seeing"
page 221

PART TWO
The Task of "Seeing"
page 329

EPILOGUE
page 509

Introduction

Ten years ago I had the fortune of meeting a Yaqui Indian from northwestern Mexico. I call him "don Juan." In Spanish, *don* is an appellative used to denote respect. I made don Juan's acquaintance under the most fortuitous circumstances. I was sitting with Bill, a friend of mine, in a bus depot in a border town in Arizona. We were very quiet. In the late afternoon the summer heat seemed unbearable. Suddenly he leaned over and tapped me on the shoulder.

"There's the man I told you about," he said in a low voice.

He nodded casually toward the entrance. An old man had just walked in.

"What did you tell me about him" I asked.

"He's the Indian that knows about peyote. Remember?"

I remembered that Bill and I had once driven all day looking for the house of an "eccentric" Mexican Indian who lived in the area. We did not find the man's house and I had the feeling that the Indians whom we had asked for directions had deliberately misled us. Bill had told me that the man was a "yerbero," a person who gathers and sells medicinal herbs, and that he knew a great deal about the hallucinogenic cactus, peyote. He had also said that it would be worth my while to meet him. Bill was my guide in the Southwest while I was collecting information and specimens of medicinal plants used by the Indians of the area.

Bill got up and went to greet the man. The Indian was of medium height. His hair was white and short, and grew a bit over his ears, accentuating the roundness of his head. He was very dark; the deep wrinkles on his face gave him the appearance of age, yet his body seemed to be strong and fit. I watched him for a moment. He moved around with a nimbleness that I would have thought impossible for an old man.

Bill signaled me to join them.

"He's a nice guy," Bill said to me. "But I can't understand him. His Spanish is weird, full of rural colloquialisms, I suppose."

The old man looked at Bill and smiled. And Bill, who speaks only a few words of Spanish, made up an absurd phrase in that language. He looked at me as if asking whether he was making sense, but I did not know what he had had in mind; he then smiled shyly and walked away. The old man looked at me and began laughing. I explained to him that my friend sometimes forgot that he did not speak Spanish.

"I think he also forgot to introduce us," I said, and I told him my name.

"And I am Juan Matus at your service," he said.

We shook hands and remained quiet for some time. I broke the silence and told him about my enterprise. I told him that I was looking for any kind of information on plants, especially peyote. I talked compulsively for a long time, and although I was almost totally ignorant on the subject, I said I knew a great deal about peyote. I thought that if I boasted about my knowledge he would become interested in talking to me. But he did not say anything. He listened patiently. Then he nodded slowly and peered at me. His eyes seemed to shine with a light of their own. I avoided his gaze. I felt embarrassed. I had the certainty that at that moment he knew I was talking nonsense.

"Come to my house some time," he finally said, taking his eyes away from me. "Perhaps we could talk there with more ease."

I did not know what else to say. I felt uneasy. After a while Bill came back into the room. He recognized my discomfort and did not say a word. We sat in tight silence for some time. Then the old man got up. His bus had come. He said goodbye.

"It didn't go too well, did it?" Bill asked.

"No."

"Did you ask him about plants?"

"I did. But I think I goofed."

"I told you, he's very eccentric. The Indians around here know him, yet they never mention him. And that's something."

"He said I could come to his house, though."

"He was bullshitting you. Sure, you can go to his house, but what does it mean? He'll never tell you anything. If you ever ask him anything he'll clam up as if you were an idiot talking nonsense."

Bill said convincingly that he had encountered people like him before, people who gave the impression of knowing a great deal. In his judgment, he said, such people were not worth the trouble, because sooner or later one could obtain the same information from someone else who did not play hard to get. He said that he had neither patience nor time for old fogies, and that it was possible that the old man was only presenting himself as being knowledgeable about herbs, when in reality he knew as little as the next man.

Bill went on talking but I was not listening. My mind kept on wondering about the old Indian. He knew I had been bluffing. I remembered his eyes. They had actually shone.

I went back to see him a couple of months later, not so much as a student of anthropology interested in medicinal plants but

as a person with an inexplicable curiosity. The way he had looked at me was an unprecedented event in my life. I wanted to know what was involved in that look. It became almost an obsession with me. I pondered it and the more I thought about it the more unusual it seemed to be.

Don Juan and I became friends, and for a year I paid him innumerable visits. I found his manner very reassuring and his sense of humor superb; but above all I felt there was a silent consistency about his acts, a consistency which was thoroughly baffling to me. I felt a strange delight in his presence and at the same time I experienced a strange discomfort. His mere company forced me to make a tremendous reevaluation of my models of behavior. I had been reared, perhaps like everyone else, to have a readiness to accept man as an essentially weak and fallible creature. What impressed me about don Juan was the fact that he did not make a point of being weak and helpless, and just being around him insured an unfavorable comparison between his way of behaving and mine. Perhaps one of the most impressive statements he made to me at that time was concerned with our inherent difference. Prior to one of my visits I had been feeling quite unhappy about the total course of my life and about a number of pressing personal conflicts that I had. When I arrived at his house I felt moody and nervous.

We were talking about my interest in knowledge; but, as usual, we were on two different tracks. I was referring to academic knowledge that transcends experience, while he was talking about direct knowledge of the world.

"Do you know anything about the world around you?" he asked.

"I know all kinds of things," I said.

"I mean do you ever feel the world around you?"

"I feel as much of the world around me as I can."

"That's not enough. You must feel everything, otherwise the world loses its sense."

I voiced the classical argument that I did not have to taste the soup in order to know the recipe, nor did I have to get an electric shock in order to know about electricity.

"You make it sound stupid," he said. "The way I see it, you want to cling to your arguments, despite the fact that they bring nothing to you; you want to remain the same even at the cost of your well-being."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I am talking about the fact that you're not complete. You have no peace."

That statement annoyed me. I felt offended. I thought he was certainly not qualified to pass judgment on my acts or my personality.

"You're plagued with problems," he said. "Why?"

"I am only a man, don Juan," I said peevishly.

I made that statement in the same vein my father used to make it. Whenever he said he was only a man he implicitly meant he was weak and helpless and his statement, like mine, was filled with an ultimate sense of despair.

Don Juan peered at me as he had done the first day we met.

"You think about yourself too much," he said and smiled. "And that gives you a strange fatigue that makes you shut off the world around you and cling to your arguments. Therefore, all you have is problems. I'm only a man too, but I don't mean that the way you do."

"How do you mean it?"

"I've vanquished my problems. Too bad my life is so short that I can't grab onto all the things I would like to. But that is not an issue; it's only a pity."

I liked the tone of his statement. There was no despair or self-pity in it.

In 1961, a year after our first meeting, don Juan disclosed to me that he had a secret knowledge of medicinal plants. He told me he was a "brujo." The Spanish word *brujo* can be rendered in English as sorcerer, medicine man, curer. From that point on the relation between us changed; I became his apprentice and for the next four years he endeavored to teach me the mysteries of sorcery. I have written about that apprenticeship in *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge.*

Our conversations were conducted in Spanish, and thanks to don Juan's superb command of that language I obtained detailed explanations of the intricate meanings of his system of beliefs. I have referred to that complex and well-systematized body of knowledge as sorcery and I have referred to him as a sorcerer because those were categories he himself used in informal conversation. In the context of more serious elucidations, however, he would use the terms "knowledge" to categorize sorcery and "man of knowledge" or "one who knows" to categorize a sorcerer.

In order to teach and corroborate his knowledge don Juan used three well-known psychotropic plants: peyote, *Lophophora williamasii;* jimson weed, *Datura inoxia;* and a species of mushroom which belongs to the genus *Psylocebe.* Through the separate ingestion of each of these hallucinogens he produced in me, as his apprentice, some peculiar states of distorted perception, or altered consciousness, which I have called "states of nonordinary reality." I have used the word "reality" because it was a major premise in don Juan's system of beliefs that the states of consciousness produced by the ingestion of any of those three plants were not hallucinations, but concrete, although unordinary, aspects of the reality of everyday life. Don Juan behaved toward these states of nonordinary reality not "as if" they were real but "as" real.

To classify these plants as hallucinogens and the states they

produced as nonordinary reality is, of course, my own device. Don Juan understood and explained the plants as being vehicles that would conduct or lead a man to certain impersonal forces or "powers" and the states they produced as being the "meetings" that a sorcerer had to have with those "powers" in order to gain control over them.

He called peyote "Mescalito" and he explained it as being a benevolent teacher and protector of men. Mescalito taught the "right way to live." Peyote was usually ingested at gatherings of sorcerers called "mitotes," where the participants would gather specifically to seek a lesson on the right way to live.

Don Juan considered the jimson weed and the mushrooms to be powers of a different sort. He called them "allies" and said that they were capable of being manipulated; a sorcerer, in fact, drew his strength from manipulating an ally. Of the two, don Juan preferred the mushroom. He maintained that the power contained in the mushroom was his personal ally and he called it "smoke" or "little smoke."

Don Juan's procedure to utilize the mushrooms was to let them dry into a fine powder inside a small gourd. He kept the gourd sealed for a year and then mixed the fine powder with five other dry plants and produced a mixture for smoking in a pipe.

In order to become a man of knowledge one had to "meet" with the ally as many times as possible; one had to become familiar with it. This premise implied, of course, that one had to smoke the hallucinogenic mixture quite often. The process of "smoking" consisted of ingesting the fine mushroom powder, which did not incinerate, and inhaling the smoke of the other five plants that made up the mixture. Don Juan explained the profound effects that the msuhrooms had on one's perceptual capacities as the "ally removing one's body."

Don Juan's method of teaching required an extraordinary

effort on the part of the apprentice. In fact, the degree of participation and involvement needed was so strenuous that by the end of 1965 I had to withdraw from the apprenticeship. I can say now, with the perspective of the five years that have elapsed, that at that time don Juan's teachings had begun to pose a serious threat to my "idea of the world." I had begun to lose the certainty, which all of us have, that the reality of everyday life is something we can take for granted.

At the time of my withdrawal I was convinced that my decision was final; I did not want to see don Juan ever again. However, in April of 1968 an early copy of my book was made available to me and I felt compelled to show it to him. I paid him a visit. Our link of teacher-apprentice was mysteriously reestablished, and I can say that on that occasion I began a second cycle of apprenticeship, very different from the first. My fear was not as acute as it had been in the past. The total mood of don Juan's teachings was more relaxed. He laughed and also made me laugh a great deal. There seemed to be a deliberate intent on his part to minimize seriousness in general. He clowned during the truly crucial moments of this second cycle, and thus helped me to overcome experiences which could easily have become obsessive. His premise was that a light and amenable disposition was needed in order to withstand the impact and the strangeness of the knowledge he was teaching me.

"The reason you got scared and quit is because you felt too damn important," he said, explaining my previous withdrawal. "Feeling important makes one heavy, clumsy, and vain. To be a man of knowledge one needs to be light and fluid."

Don Juan's particular interest in his second cycle of apprenticeship was to teach me to "see." Apparently in his system of knowledge there was the possibility of making a semantic difference between "seeing" and "looking" as two distinct manners of perceiving. "Looking" referred to the ordinary way

in which we are accustomed to perceive the world, while "seeing" entailed a very complex process by virtue of which a man of knowledge allegedly perceives the "essence" of the things of the world.

In order to present the intricacies of this learning process in a readable form I have condensed long passages of questions and answers, and thus I have edited my original field notes. It is my belief, however, that at this point my presentation cannot possibly detract from the meaning of don Juan's teachings. The editing was aimed at making my notes flow, as conversation flows, so they would have the impact I desired; that is to say, I wanted by means of a reportage to communicate to the reader the drama and directness of the field situation. Each section I have set as a chapter was a session with don Juan. As a rule, he always concluded each of our sessions on an abrupt note; thus the dramatic tone of the ending of each chapter is not a literary device of my own, it was a device proper of don Juan's oral tradition. It seemed to be a mnemonic device that helped me to retain the dramatic quality and importance of the lessons.

Certain explanations are needed, however, to make my reportage cogent, since its clarity depends on the elucidation of a number of key concepts or key units that I want to emphasize. This choice of emphasis is congruous with my interest in social science. It is perfectly possible that another person with a different set of goals and expectations would single out concepts entirely different from those I have chosen myself.

During the second cycle of apprenticeship don Juan made a point of assuring me that the use of the smoking mixture was the indispensable prerequisite to "seeing." Therefore I had to use it as often as possible.

"Only the smoke can give you the necessary speed to catch a glimpse of that fleeting world," he said.

With the aid of the psychotropic mixture, he produced in

me a series of states of nonordinary reality. The main feature of such states, in relation to what don Juan seemed to be doing, was a condition of "inapplicability." What I perceived in those states of altered consciousness was incomprehensible and impossible to interpret by means of our everyday mode of understanding the world. In other words, the condition of inapplicability entailed the cessation of the pertinence of my world view.

Don Juan used this condition of inapplicability of the states of nonordinary reality in order to introduce a series of preconceived, new "units of meaning." Units of meaning were all the single elements pertinent to the knowledge don Juan was striving to teach me. I have called them units of meaning because they were the basic conglomerate of sensory data and their interpretations on which more complex meaning was constructed. One example of such a unit is the way in which the psysiological effect of the psychotropic mixture was understood. It produced a numbness and loss of motor control that was interpreted in don Juan's system as an act performed by the smoke, which in this case was the ally, in order "to remove the body of the practitioner."

Units of meaning were grouped together in a specific way, and each block thus created formed what I have called a "sensible interpretation." Obviously there has to be an endless number of possible sensible interpretations that are pertinent to sorcery that a sorcerer must learn to make. In our day-to-day life we are confronted with an endless number of sensible interpretations pertinent to it. A simple example could be the no longer deliberate interpretation, which we make scores of times every day, of the structure we call "room." It is obvious that we have learned to interpret the structure we call room in terms of room; thus room is a sensible interpretation because it requires that at the time we make it we are cognizant, in one way or another, of all the elements that

enter into its composition. A system of sensible interpretation is, in other words, the process by virtue of which a practitioner is cognizant of all the units of meaning necessary to make assumptions, deductions, predictions, etc., about all the situations pertinent to his activity.

By "practitioner" I mean a participant who has an adequate knowledge of all, or nearly all, the units of meaning involved in his particular system of sensible interpretation. Don Juan was a practitioner; that is, he was a sorcerer who knew all the steps of his sorcery.

As a practitioner he attempted to make his system of sensible interpretation accessible to me. Such an accessibility, in this case, was equivalent to a process of resocialization in which new ways of interpreting perceptual data were learned.

I was the "stranger," the one who lacked the capacity to make intelligent and congruous interpretations of the units of meaning proper to sorcery.

Don Juan's task, as a practitioner making his system accessible to me, was to disarrange a particular certainty which I share with everyone else, the certainty that our "commonsense" views of the world are final. Through the use of psychotropic plants, and through well-directed contacts between the alien system and myself, he succeeded in pointing out to me that my view of the world cannot be final because it is only an interpretation.

For the American Indian, perhaps for thousands of years, the vague phenomenon we call sorcery has been a serious, bona fide practice, comparable to that of our science. Our difficulty in understanding it stems, no doubt, from the alien units of meaning with which it deals.

Don Juan had once told me that a man of knowledge had predilections. I asked him to explain his statement.

"My predilection is to *see*," he said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I like to *see*," he said, "because only by *seeing* can a man of knowledge know."

"What kind of things do you *see?*"

"Everything."

"But I also see everything and I'm not a man of knowledge."

"No. You don't *see*."

"I think I do."

"I tell you, you don't."

"What makes you say that, don Juan?"

"You only look at the surface of things."

"Do you mean that every man of knowledge actually sees through everything he looks at?"

"No. That's not what I mean. I said that a man of knowledge has his own predilections; mine is just to *see* and to know; others do other things."

"What other things, for example?"

"Take Sacateca, he's a man of knowledge and his predilection is dancing. So he dances and knows."

"Is the predilection of a man of knowledge something he does in order to know?"

"Yes, that is correct."

"But how could dancing help Sacateca to know?"

"One can say that Sacateca dances with all he has."

"Does he dance like I dance? I mean like dancing?"

"Let's say that he dances like I *see* and not like you may dance."

"Does he also *see* the way you *see?*"

"Yes, but he also dances."

"How does Sacateca dance?"

"It's hard to explain that. It is a peculiar way of dancing he does when he wants to know. But all I can say about it is that, unless you understand the ways of a man who knows, it is impossible to talk about dancing or *seeing*."

"Have you *seen* him doing his dancing?"

"Yes. However, it is not possible for everyone who looks at his dancing to *see* that it is his peculiar way of knowing."

I knew Sacateca, or at least I knew who he was. We had met and once I had bought him a beer. He was very polite and told me I should feel free to stop at his house anytime I wanted to. I toyed for a long time with the idea of visiting him but I did not tell don Juan.

On the afternoon of May 14, 1962, I drove up to Sacateca's house; he had given me directions how to get there and I had no trouble finding it. It was on a corner and had a fence all around it. The gate was closed. I walked around it to see if I could peek inside the house. It appeared to be deserted.

"Don Elias," I called out loud. The chickens got frightened and scattered about cackling furiously. A small dog came to the fence. I expected it to bark at me; instead, it just sat there looking at me. I called out once again and the chickens had another burst of cackling.

An old woman came out of the house. I asked her to call don Elias.

"He's not here," she said.

"Where can I find him?"

"He's in the fields."

"Where in the fields?"

"I don't know. Come back in the late afternoon. He'll be here around five."

"Are you don Elias' wife?"

"Yes, I'm his wife," she said and smiled.

I tried to ask her about Sacateca but she excused herself and said that she did not speak Spanish well. I got into my car and drove away.

I returned to the house around six o'clock. I drove to the door and yelled Sacateca's name. This time he came out of the house. I turned on my tape recorder, which in its brown

leather case looked like a camera hanging from my shoulder. He seemed to recognize me.

"Oh, it's you," he said, smiling. "How's Juan?"

"He's fine. But how are you, don Elias?"

He did not answer. He seemed to be nervous. Overtly he was very composed, but I felt that he was ill at ease.

"Has Juan sent you here on some sort of errand?"

"No. I came here by myself."

"What in the world for?"

His question seemed to betray very bona fide surprise.

"I just wanted to talk to you," I said, hoping to sound as casual as possible. "Don Juan has told me marvelous things about you and I got curious and wanted to ask you a few questions."

Sacateca was standing in front of me. His body was lean and wiry. He was wearing khaki pants and shirt. His eyes were half-closed; he seemed to be sleepy or perhaps drunk. His mouth was open a bit and his lower lip hung. I noticed that he was breathing deeply and seemed to be almost snoring. The thought came to me that Sacateca was undoubtedly plastered out of his mind. But that thought seemed to be very incongruous because only a few minutes before, when he came out of his house, he had been very alert and aware of my presence.

"What do you want to talk about?" he finally said.

His voice was tired; it was as though his words dragged after each other. I felt very uneasy. It was as if his tiredness was contagious and pulling me.

"Nothing in particular," I answered. "I just came to chat with you in a friendly way. You once asked me to come to your house."

"Yes, I did, but it's not the same now."

"Why isn't it the same?"

"Don't you talk with Juan?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then what do you want with me?"

"I thought maybe I could ask you some questions?"

"Ask Juan. Isn't he teaching you?"

"He is, but just the same I would like to ask you about what he is teaching me, and have your opinion. This way I'll be able to know what to do."

"Why do you want to do that? Don't you trust Juan?"

"I do."

"Then why don't you ask him to tell you what you want to know?"

"I do. And he tells me. But if you could also tell me about what don Juan is teaching me, perhaps I will understand better."

"Juan can tell you everything. He alone can do that. Don't you understand that?"

"I do, but then I'd like to talk with people like you, don Elias. One does not find a man of knowledge every day."

"Juan is a man of knowledge."

"I know that."

"Then why are you talking to me?"

"I said I came to be friends."

"No, you didn't. There is something else about you this time."

I wanted to explain myself and all I could do was mumble incoherently. Sacateca did not say anything. He seemed to listen attentively. His eyes were half-closed again but I felt he was peering at me. He nodded almost imperceptibly. Then his lids opened and I saw his eyes. He seemed to be looking past me. He casually tapped the floor with the tip of his right foot, just behind his left heel. His legs were slightly arched; his arms were limp against his sides. Then he lifted his right arm; his hand was open with the palm turned perpendicular

to the ground; his fingers were extended and pointing toward me. He let his hand wobble a couple of times before he brought it to my face level. He held it in that position for an instant and then he said a few words to me. His voice was very clear, yet the words dragged.

After a moment he dropped his hand to his side and remained motionless, taking a strange position. He was standing, resting on the ball of his left foot. His right foot was crossed behind the heel of the left foot and he was tapping the floor rhythmically and gently with the tip of his right foot.

I felt an unwarranted apprehension, a form of restlessness. My thoughts seemed to be dissociated. I was thinking unrelated nonsensical thoughts that had nothing to do with what was going on. I noticed my discomfort and tried to steer my thoughts back to the situation at hand, but I couldn't in spite of a great struggle. It was as if some force was keeping me from concentrating or thinking relevant thoughts.

Sacateca had not said a word, and I didn't know what else to say or do. Quite automatically, I turned around and left.

Later on I felt compelled to tell don Juan about my encounter with Sacateca. Don Juan roared with laughter.

"What really took place there?" I asked.

"Sacateca danced!" don Juan said. "He *saw* you, then he danced."

"What did he do to me? I felt very cold and dizzy."

"He apparently didn't like you and stopped you by tossing a word at you."

"How could he possibly do that?" I exclaimed incredulously.

"Very simple; he stopped you with his will."

"What did you say?"

"He stopped you with his will!"

The explanation did not suffice. His statements sounded like gibberish to me. I tried to probe him further, but he could not explain the event to my satisfaction.

Obviously that event or any event that occurred within this alien system of sensible interpretation could be explained or understood only in terms of the units of meaning proper to that system. This work is, therefore, a reportage and should be read as a reportage. The system I recorded was incomprehensible to me, thus the pretense to anything other than reporting about it would be misleading and impertinent. In this respect I have adopted the phenomenological method and have striven to deal with sorcery solely as phenomena that were presented to me. I, as the perceiver, recorded what I perceived, and at the moment of recording I endeavored to suspend judgment.

PART ONE

The Preliminaries of "Seeing"

1

April 2, 1968

Don Juan looked at me for a moment and did not seem at all surprised to see me, even though it had been more than two years since I last visited him. He put his hand on my shoulder and smiled gently and said that I looked different, that I was getting fat and soft.

I had brought him a copy of my book. Without any preliminaries I took it out of my brief case and handed it to him.

"It's a book about you, don Juan," I said.

He took it and flipped through the pages as if they were a deck of cards. He liked the green color on the dust jacket and the height of the book. He felt the cover with his palms, turned it around a couple of times, and then handed it back to me. I felt a great surge of pride.

"I want you to keep it," I said.

He shook his head with a silent laugh.

"I better not," he said, and then added with a broad smile: "You know what we do with paper in Mexico."

I laughed. I thought his touch of irony was beautiful.

We were sitting on a bench in the park of a small town in the mountainous area of central Mexico. I had had absolutely no way of letting him know about my intention of paying him a visit, but I was certain I was going to find him, and I did. I waited only a short while in that town before don Juan

came down from the mountains and I found him at the market, at the stand of one of his friends.

Don Juan told me, matter-of-factly, that I was there just in time to take him back to Sonora, and we sat in the park to wait for a friend of his, a Mazatec Indian with whom he lived.

We waited about three hours. We talked about different unimportant things, and toward the end of the day, right before his friend came, I related to him some events I had witnessed a few days before.

During my trip to see him my car broke down in the outskirts of a city and I had to stay in town for three days while it was being repaired. There was a motel across the street from the auto shop, but the outskirts of towns are always depressing for me, so I took lodgings in a modern eight-story hotel in the center of town.

The bellboy told me that the hotel had a restaurant, and when I came down to eat I found that there were tables out on the sidewalk. It was a rather handsome arrangement set on the street corner under some low brick arches of modern lines. It was cool outside and there were empty tables, yet I preferred to sit in the stuffy indoors. I had noticed upon entering that a group of shoeshine boys were sitting on the curb in front of the restaurant, and I was certain that they would have hounded me had I taken one of the outside tables.

From where I was seated I could see the group of boys through the glass window. A couple of young men took a table and the boys flocked around them, asking to shine their shoes. The young men refused and I was amazed to see that the boys did not insist and went back to sit on the curb. After a while three men in business suits got up and left and the boys ran to their table and began eating the leftovers; in a matter of seconds the plates were clean. The same thing happened with leftovers on all the other tables.

I noticed that the children were quite orderly; if they spilled water they sponged it up with their own shoeshine cloths. I also noticed the thoroughness of their scavenging procedures. They even ate the ice cubes left in the glasses of water and the lemon slices from the tea, peel and all. There was absolutely nothing that they wasted.

In the course of the time I stayed in the hotel I found out that there was an agreement between the children and the manager of the restaurant; the boys were allowed to hang around the premises to make some money from the customers and were also allowed to eat the leftovers, provided that they did not harass anybody and did not break anything. There were eleven in all, ranging in age from five to twelve; the oldest, however, was kept at a distance from the rest of the group. They deliberately ostracized him, taunting him with a singsong that he already had pubic hair and was too old to be among them.

After three days of watching them go like vultures after the most meager of leftovers I became truly despondent, and I left that city feeling that there was no hope for those children whose world was already molded by their day-after-day struggle for crumbs.

"Do you feel sorry for them?" don Juan exclaimed in a questioning tone.

"I certainly do," I said.

"Why?"

"Because I'm concerned with the well-being of my fellow men. Those are children and their world is ugly and cheap."

"Wait! Wait! How can you say that their world is *ugly* and *cheap?*" don Juan said, mocking my statement. "You think that you're better off, don't you?"

I said I did; and he asked me why; and I told him that in comparison to those children's world mine was infinitely more

varied and rich in experiences and in opportunities for personal satisfaction and development. Don Juan's laughter was friendly and genuine. He said that I was not careful with what I was saying, that I had no way of knowing about the richness and the opportunities in the world of those children.

I thought don Juan was being stubborn. I really thought he was taking the opposite view just to annoy me. I sincerely believed that those children did not have the slightest chance for any intellectual growth.

I argued my point for a while longer and then don Juan asked me bluntly, "Didn't you once tell me that in your opinion man's greatest accomplishment was to become a man of knowledge?"

I had said that, and I repeated again that in my opinion to become a man of knowledge was one of the greatest intellectual accomplishments.

"Do you think that your very rich world would ever help you to become a man of knowledge?" don Juan asked with slight sarcasm.

I did not answer and he then worded the same question in a different manner, a thing I always do to him when I think he does not understand.

"In other words," he said, smiling broadly, obviously aware that I was cognizant of his ploy, "can your freedom and opportunities help you to become a man of knowledge?"

"No!" I said emphatically.

"Then how could you feel sorry for those children?" he said seriously. "Any of them could become a man of knowledge. All the men of knowledge I know were kids like those you saw eating leftovers and licking the tables."

Don Juan's argument gave me an uncomfortable sensation. I had not felt sorry for those underprivileged children because they did not have enough to eat, but because in my terms

their world had already condemned them to be intellectually inadequate. And yet in don Juan's terms any of them could achieve what I believed to be the epitome of man's intellectual accomplishment, the goal of becoming a man of knowledge. My reason for pitying them was incongruous. Don Juan had nailed me neatly.

"Perhaps you're right," I said. "But how can one avoid the desire, the genuine desire, to help our fellow men?"

"How do you think one can help them?"

"By alleviating their burden. The least one can do for our fellow men is to try to change them. You yourself are involved in doing that. Aren't you?"

"No. I'm not. I don't know what to change or why to change anything in my fellow men."

"What about me, don Juan? Weren't you teaching me so I could change?"

"No. I'm not trying to change you. It may happen that one day you may become a man of knowledge—there's no way to know that—but that will not change you. Some day perhaps you'll be able to *see* men in another mode and then you'll realize that there's no way to change anything about them."

"What's this other mode of seeing men, don Juan?"

"Men look different when you *see*. The little smoke will help you to *see* men as fibers of light."

"Fibers of light?"

"Yes. Fibers, like white cobwebs. Very fine threads that circulate from the head to the navel. Thus a man looks like an egg of circulating fibers. And his arms and legs are like luminous bristles, bursting out in all directions."

"Is that the way everyone looks?"

"Everyone. Besides, every man is in touch with everything else, not through his hands, though, but through a bunch of long fibers that shoot out from the center of his abdomen.

Those fibers join a man to his surroundings; they keep his balance; they give him stability. So, as you may *see* some day, a man is a luminous egg whether he's a beggar or a king and there's no way to change anything; or rather, what could be changed in that luminous egg? What?"

2

My visit to don Juan started a new cycle. I had no trouble falling back again into my old pattern of enjoying his sense of drama and his humor and his patience with me. I definitely felt that I had to visit him more often. Not to see don Juan was indeed a great loss for me; besides, I had something of particular interest that I wanted to discuss with him.

After I had finished the book about his teachings I began to reexamine the field notes I had not used. I had discarded a great deal of data because my emphasis had been on the states of nonordinary reality. Rehashing my old notes I had come to the conclusion that a skillful sorcerer could bring forth the most specialized range of perception in his apprentice by simply "manipulating social cues." My whole argument about the nature of these manipulatory procedures rested on the assumption that a leader was needed to bring forth the necessary range of perception. I took as a specific test case the sorcerers' peyote meetings. I contended that in those meetings sorcerers reached an agreement about the nature of reality without any overt exchange of words or signs, and my conclusion was that a very sophisticated code was employed by the participants to arrive at such an agreement. I had constructed a complex system to explain the code and procedures,

so I went back to see don Juan to ask his personal opinion and advice about my work.

May 21, 1968

Nothing out of the ordinary happened during my trip to see don Juan. The temperature in the desert was over a hundred degrees and was quite uncomfortable. The heat subsided in the late afternoon and by the time I arrived at his house, in the early evening, there was a cool breeze. I was not very tired, so we sat in his room and talked. I felt comfortable and relaxed, and we talked for hours. It was not a conversation that I would have liked to record; I was not really trying to make great sense or trying to draw great meaning; we talked about the weather, the crops, his grandson, the Yaqui Indians, the Mexican government. I told don Juan how much I enjoyed the exquisite sensation of talking in the dark. He said that my statement was consistent with my talkative nature; that it was easy for me to like chatting in the darkness because talking was the only thing I could do at that time, while sitting around. I argued that it was more than the mere act of talking that I enjoyed. I said that I relished the soothing warmth of the darkness around us. He asked me what I did at home when it was dark. I said that invariably I would turn on the lights or I would go out into the lighted streets until it was time to go to sleep.

"Oh!" he said incredulously. "I thought you had learned to use the darkness."

"What can you use it for?" I asked.

He said the darkness—and he called it "the darkness of the day"—was the best time to "see." He stressed the word "see" with a peculiar inflection. I wanted to know what he meant by that, but he said it was too late to go into it then.

May 22, 1968

As soon as I woke up in the morning, and without any preliminaries, I told don Juan that I had constructed a system to explain what took place at a peyote meeting, a mitote. I took my notes and read to him what I had done. He listened patiently while I struggled to elucidate my schemata.

I said that I believed a covert leader was necessary in order to cue the participants so they could arrive at any pertinent agreement. I pointed out that people attend a mitote to seek the presence of Mescalito and his lessons about the right way to live; and that those persons never exchange a word or a gesture among them, yet they agree about the presence of Mescalito and his specific lesson. At least that was what they purportedly did in the mitotes I had attended: they agreed that Mescalito had appeared to them individually and had given them a lesson. In my personal experience I had found that the form of the individual visit of Mescalito and his consequent lesson were strikingly homogeneous, although varying in content from person to person. I could not explain this homogeneity except as a result of a subtle and complex system of cueing.

It took me close to two hours to read and explain to don Juan the scheme I had constructed. I ended my talk by begging him to tell me in his own words what were the exact procedures for reaching agreement.

When I had finished he frowned. I thought he must have found my explanation challenging; he appeared to be involved in deep deliberation. After a reasonable silence I asked him what he thought about my idea.

My question made him suddenly turn his frown into a smile and then into roaring laughter. I tried to laugh too and asked nervously what was so funny.

"You're deranged!" he exclaimed. "Why should anyone be bothered with cueing at such an important time as a mitote? Do you think one ever fools around with Mescalito?"

I thought for a moment that he was being evasive; he was not really answering my question.

"Why should anyone cue?" don Juan asked stubbornly. "You have been in mitotes. You should know that no one told you how to feel, or what to do; no one except Mescalito himself."

I insisted that such an explanation was not possible and begged him again to tell me how the agreement was reached.

"I know why you have come," don Juan said in a mysterious tone. "I can't help you in your endeavor because there is no system of cueing."

"But how can all those persons agree about Mescalito's presence?"

"They agree because they *see*," don Juan said dramatically, and then added casually, "Why don't you attend another mitote and *see* for yourself?"

I felt that was a trap. I did not say anything, but put my notes away. He did not insist.

A while later he asked me to drive him to the house of one of his friends. We spent most of the day there. During the course of a conversation his friend John asked me what had become of my interest in peyote. John had provided the peyote buttons for my first experience nearly eight years before. I did not know what to say to him. Don Juan came to my aid and told John I was doing fine.

On our way back to don Juan's house I felt obligated to make a comment about John's question and I said, among other things, that I had no intention of learning any more about peyote, because it required a kind of courage I did not have; and that I had really meant it when I said I had quit.

Don Juan smiled and did not say anything. I kept on talking until we got to his house.

We sat on the clean area in front of the door. It was a warm, clear day, but there was enough of a breeze in the late afternoon to make it pleasant.

"Why do you have to push it so hard?" don Juan said suddenly. "How many years now have you been saying that you don't want to learn any more?"

"Three."

"Why are you so vehement about it?"

"I feel that I'm betraying you, don Juan. I think that's why I'm always talking about it."

"You're not betraying me."

"I have failed you. I have run away. I feel I am defeated."

"You do what you can. Besides, you haven't been defeated yet. What I have to teach you is very hard. I, for instance, found it perhaps even harder than you."

"But you kept at it, don Juan. My case is different. I gave up and I have come to see you not because I want to learn, but only because I wanted to ask you to clarify a point in my work."

Don Juan looked at me for a moment and then he looked away.

"You ought to let the smoke guide you again," he said forcefully.

"No, don Juan, I can't use your smoke any more. I think I have exhausted myself."

"You haven't even begun."

"I am too afraid."

"So you're afraid. There is nothing new about being afraid. Don't think about your fear. Think about the wonders of *seeing!*"

"I sincerely wish I could think about those wonders, but I

can't. When I think of your smoke I feel a sort of darkness coming upon me. It is as if there were no more people on the earth, no one to turn to. Your smoke has shown me the ultimate of loneliness, don Juan."

"That's not true. Take me, for example. The smoke is my ally and I don't feel such a loneliness."

"But you're different; you've conquered your fear."

Don Juan patted me gently on the shoulder.

"You're not afraid," he said softly. His voice carried a strange accusation.

"Am I lying about my fear, don Juan?"

"I'm not concerned with lies," he said severely. "I'm concerned with something else. The reason you don't want to learn is not because you're afraid. It's something else."

I vehemently urged him to tell me what it was. I pleaded with him, but he did not say anything; he just shook his head as if he could not believe I did not know it.

I told him that perhaps it was inertia which kept me from learning. He wanted to know the meaning of the word "inertia." I read to him from my dictionary: "The tendency of matter to remain at rest if at rest, or, if moving, to keep moving in the same direction, unless affected by some outside force."

" 'Unless affected by some outside force,' " he repeated. "That's about the best word you've found. I've told you already, only a crackpot would undertake the task of becoming a man of knowledge of his own accord. A sober-headed man has to be tricked into doing it."

"I'm sure there must be scores of people who would gladly undertake the task," I said.

"Yes, but those don't count. They are usually cracked. They are like gourds that look fine from the outside and yet they would leak the minute you put pressure on them, the minute you filled them with water.

"I had to trick you into learning once, the same way my benefactor tricked me. Otherwise you wouldn't have learned as much as you did. Perhaps it's time to trick you again."

The tricking to which he was referring was one of the most crucial points of my apprenticeship. It had taken place years before, yet in my mind it was as vivid as if it had just happened. Through very artful manipulations don Juan had once forced me into a direct and terrifying confrontation with a woman reputed to be a sorceress. The clash resulted in a profound animosity on her part. Don Juan exploited my fear of the woman as motivation to continue with the apprenticeship, claiming that I had to learn more about sorcery in order to protect myself against her magical onslaughts. The end results of his "tricking" were so convincing that I sincerely felt I had no other recourse than to learn as much as possible if I wanted to stay alive.

"If you're planning to scare me again with that woman I simply won't come back any more," I said.

Don Juan's laughter was very joyous.

"Don't worry," he said reassuringly. "Tricks with fear won't work with you any more. You're no longer afraid. But if it is needed, you can be tricked wherever you are; you don't have to be around here for that."

He put his arms behind his head and lay down to sleep. I worked on my notes until he woke up a couple of hours later; it was almost dark then. Noticing that I was writing, he sat up straight and, smiling, asked me if I had written myself out of my problem.

May 23, 1968

We were talking about Oaxaca. I told don Juan that once I had arrived in the city on a day when the market was open,

a day when scores of Indians from all over the area flock to town to sell food and all kinds of trinkets. I mentioned that I was particularly interested in a man who was selling medicinal plants. He carried a wooden kit in which he kept a number of small jars with dry, shredded plants, and he stood in the middle of the street holding one jar, yelling a very peculiar singsong.

"I bring here," he would say, "for fleas, flies, mosquitoes, and lice.

"Also for pigs, horses, goats, and cows.

"I have here for all the maladies of man.

"The mumps, the measles, rheumatism, and gout.

"I bring here for the heart, the liver, the stomach, and the loin.

"Come near, ladies and gentlemen.

"I bring here for fleas, flies, mosquitoes, and lice."

I had listened to him for a long time. His format consisted of enumerating a long list of man's diseases for which he claimed to have a cure; the device he used to give rhythm to his singsong was to pause after naming a set of four.

Don Juan said that he also used to sell herbs in the market in Oaxaca when he was young. He said he still remembered his selling pitch and he yelled it for me. He said that he and his friend Vicente used to make concoctions.

"Those concoctions were really good," don Juan said. "My friend Vicente used to make great extracts of plants."

I told don Juan that once during one of my trips to Mexico I had met his friend Vicente. Don Juan seemed to be surprised and wanted to know more about it.

I was driving through Durango at that time and remembered that don Juan had once told me I should pay a visit to his friend, who lived there. I looked for him and found him, and talked to him for a while. Before I left he gave me a sack with

some plants and a series of instructions for replanting one of them.

I stopped on my way to the town of Aguas Calientes. I made sure there were no people around. For at least ten minutes I had been watching the road and surrounding areas. There had not been any houses in sight, nor cattle grazing alongside the road. I stopped on the top of a small hill; from there I could see the road ahead and behind me. It was deserted in both directions as far into the distance as I could see. I waited for a few minutes to orient myself and to remember don Vicente's instructions. I took one of the plants, walked into a field of cacti on the east side of the road, and planted it as don Vicente had instructed me. I had with me a bottle of mineral water with which I intended to sprinkle the plant. I tried to open it by hitting the cap with the small iron bar I had used as a digging stick, but the bottle exploded and a glass sliver nicked my upper lip and made it bleed.

I walked back to my car to get another bottle of mineral water. As I was getting it out of my trunk a man driving a VW station wagon stopped and asked me if I needed help. I said that everything was all right and he drove away. I returned to water the plant and then I started back toward my car. When I was perhaps a hundred feet away I heard some voices. I hurried down a slope onto the highway and found three Mexicans at the car, two men and one woman. One of the men was sitting on the front bumper. He was perhaps in his late thirties, of medium height, with black curly hair. He was carrying a bundle on his back and was wearing old slacks and a worn-out pinkish shirt. His shoes were untied and perhaps too big for his feet; they seemed to be loose and uncomfortable. He was sweating profusely.

The other man was standing about twenty feet away from the car. He was small-boned and shorter than the other man,

and his hair was straight and combed backwards. He carried a smaller bundle and was older, perhaps in his late forties. His clothes were in better condition. He had on a dark blue jacket, light blue slacks, and black shoes. He was not perspiring at all and seemed aloof, uninterested.

The woman appeared to be also in her forties. She was fat and had a very dark complexion. She wore black Capris, a white sweater, and black, pointed shoes. She did not carry a bundle, but was holding a portable transistor radio. She seemed to be very tired and her face was covered with beads of perspiration.

When I approached them the younger man and the woman accosted me. They wanted a ride. I told them I did not have any space in my car. I showed them that the back seat was loaded to capacity and there was really no room left. The man suggested that if I drove slowly they could go perched on the back bumper, or lying across the front fender. I thought the idea was preposterous. Yet there was such an urgency in their plea that I felt very sad and ill at ease. I gave them some money for their bus fare.

The younger man took the bills and thanked me, but the older man turned his back disdainfully.

"I want transportation," he said "I'm not interested in money."

Then he turned to me. "Can't you give us some food or water?" he asked.

I really had nothing to give them. They stood there looking at me for a moment and then they began to walk away.

I got into my car and tried to start the motor. The heat was very intense and the motor seemed to be flooded. The younger man stopped when he heard the starter grinding and came back and stood behind my car ready to push it. I felt a tremendous apprehension. I was actually panting desperately. The motor finally ignited and I zoomed away.

After I had finished relating this, don Juan remained pensive for a long while.

"Why haven't you told me this before?" he said without looking at me.

I did not know what to say. I shrugged my shoulders and told him that I never thought it was important.

"It's damn important!" he said. "Vicente is a first-rate sorcerer. He gave you something to plant because he had his reasons; and if you encountered three people who seemed to have popped out of nowhere right after you had planted it, there was a reason for that too; but only a fool like you would disregard the incident and think it wasn't important."

He wanted to know exactly what had taken place when I paid don Vicente the visit.

I told him that I was driving across town and passed by the market; I got the idea then of looking for don Vicente. I walked into the market and went to the section for medicinal herbs. There were three stands in a row but they were run by three fat women. I walked to the end of the aisle and found another stand around the corner. There I saw a thin, small-boned, white-haired man. He was at that moment selling a birdcage to a woman.

I waited around until he was by himself and then I asked him if he knew don Vicente Medrano. He looked at me without answering.

"What do you want with that Vicente Medrano?" he finally said.

I told him I had come to pay him a visit on behalf of his friend, and gave him don Juan's name. The old man looked at me for an instant and then he said he was Vicente Medrano and was at my service. He asked me to sit down. He seemed to be pleased, very relaxed, and genuinely friendly. I told him about my friendship with don Juan. I felt that there was an immediate bond of sympathy between us. He told me he

had known don Juan since they were in their twenties. Don Vicente had only words of praise for don Juan. Toward the end of our conversation he said in a vibrant tone: "Juan is a true man of knowledge. I myself have dwelled only briefly with plant powers. I was always interested in their curative properties; I have even collected botany books, which I sold only recently."

He remained silent for a moment; he rubbed his chin a couple of times. He seemed to be searching for a proper word.

"You may say that I am only a man of lyric knowledge," he said. "I'm not like Juan, my Indian brother."

Don Vicente was silent again for another moment. His eyes were glassy and were staring at the floor by my left side.

Then he turned to me and said almost in a whisper, "Oh, how high soars my Indian brother!"

Don Vicente got up. It seemed that our conversation was finished.

If anyone else had made a statement about an Indian brother I would have taken it for a cheap cliché. Don Vicente's tone, however, was so sincere and his eyes were so clear that he enraptured me with the image of his Indian brother soaring so high. And I believed he meant what he had said.

"Lyric knowledge, my eye!" don Juan exclaimed after I had recounted the whole story. "Vicente is a brujo. Why did you go to see him?"

I reminded him that he himself had asked me to visit don Vicente.

"That's absurd!" he exclaimed dramatically. "I said to you, some day, when you know how to *see*, you should pay a visit to my friend Vicente; that's what I said. Apparently you were not listening."

I argued that I could find no harm in having met don Vicente, that I was charmed by his manners and his kindness.

Don Juan shook his head from side to side and in a half-kidding tone expressed his bewilderment at what he called my "baffling good luck." He said that my visiting don Vicente was like walking into a lion's den armed with a twig. Don Juan seemed to be agitated, yet I could not see any reason for his concern. Don Vicente was a beautiful man. He seemed so frail; his strangely haunting eyes made him look almost ethereal. I asked don Juan how a beautiful person like that could be dangerous.

"You're a damn fool," he said and looked stern for a moment. "He won't cause you any harm by himself. But knowledge is power, and once a man embarks on the road of knowledge he's no longer liable for what may happen to those who come in contact with him. You should have paid him a visit when you knew enough to defend yourself; not from him, but from the power he has harnessed, which, by the way, is not his or anybody else's. Upon hearing that you were my friend, Vicente assumed that you knew how to protect yourself and then made you a gift. He apparently liked you and must have made you a great gift, and you chucked it. What a pity!"

May 24, 1968

I had been pestering don Juan nearly all day to tell me about don Vicente's gift. I had pointed out to him in various ways that he had to consider our differences; I said that what was self-explanatory for him might be totally incomprehensible for me.

"How many plants did he give you?" he finally asked.

I said four, but I actually could not remember. Then don Juan wanted to know exactly what had taken place after I

left don Vicente and before I stopped on the side of the road. But I could not remember that either.

"The number of plants is important and so is the order of events," he said. "How can I tell you what his gift was if you don't remember what happened?"

I struggled unsuccessfully to visualize the sequence of events.

"If you would remember everything that happened," he said, "I could at least tell you how you chucked your gift."

Don Juan seemed to be very disturbed. He urged me impatiently to recollect, but my memory was almost a total blank.

"What do you think I did wrong, don Juan?" I said, just to continue the conversation.

"Everything."

"But I followed don Vicente's instructions to the letter."

"So what? Don't you understand that to follow his instructions was meaningless?"

"Why?"

"Because those instructions were designed for someone who could *see*, not for an idiot who got out with his life just by sheer luck. You went to see Vicente without preparation. He liked you and gave you a gift. And that gift could easily have cost you your life."

"But why did he give me something so serious? If he's a sorcerer he should've known that I don't know anything."

"No, he couldn't have *seen* that. You look as though you know, but you don't know much really."

I said I was sincerely convinced that I had never misrepresented myself, at least not deliberately.

"I didn't mean that," he said. "If you were putting on airs Vicente could've seen through you. This is something worse than putting on airs. When I *see* you, you look to me as if you

know a great deal, and yet I myself know that you don't."

"What do I seem to know, don Juan?"

"Secrets of power, of course; a brujo's knowledge. So when Vicente *saw* you he made you a gift and you acted toward it the way a dog acts toward food when his belly is full. A dog pisses on food when he doesn't want to eat any more, so other dogs won't eat it. You did that on the gift. Now we'll never know what really took place. You have lost a great deal. What a waste!"

He was quiet for some time; then he shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"It's useless to complain," he said, "and yet it's so difficult not to. Gifts of power happen so rarely in one's life; they are unique and precious. Take me, for instance; nobody has ever made me such a gift. There are very few people, to my knowledge, who ever had one. To waste something so unique is a shame."

"I see what you mean, don Juan," I said. "Is there anything I can do now to salvage the gift?"

He laughed and repeated several times, "To salvage the gift."

"That sounds nice," he said. "I like that. Yet there isn't anything one can do to salvage your gift."

May 25, 1968

Don Juan spent nearly all his time today showing me how to assemble simple trapping devices for small animals. We had been cutting and cleaning branches nearly all morning. There were many questions in my mind. I had tried to talk to him while we worked, but he had made a joke and said that of the two of us only I could move my hands and my mouth at the same time. We finally sat down to rest and I blurted out a question.

"What's it like to *see*, don Juan?"

"You have to learn to *see* in order to know that. I can't tell you."

"Is it a secret I shouldn't know?"

"No. It's just that I can't describe it."

"Why?"

"It wouldn't make sense to you."

"Try me, don Juan. Maybe it'll make sense to me."

"No. You must do it yourself. Once you learn, you can *see* every single thing in the world in a different way."

"Then, don Juan, you don't see the world in the usual way anymore."

"I see both ways. When I want to *look* at the world I see it the way you do. Then when I want to *see* it I look at it the way I know and I perceive it in a different way."

"Do things look consistently the same every time you *see* them?"

"Things don't change. You change your way of looking, that's all."

"I mean, don Juan, that if you *see*, for instance, the same tree, does it remain the same every time you *see* it?"

"No. It changes and yet it's the same."

"But if the same tree changes every time you *see* it, your *seeing* may be a mere illusion."

He laughed and did not answer for some time, but seemed to be thinking. Finally he said, "Whenever you look at things you don't *see* them. You just look at them, I suppose to make sure that something is there. Since you're not concerned with *seeing*, things look very much the same every time you look at them. When you learn to *see*, on the other hand, a thing is never the same every time you *see* it, and yet it is the same. I told you, for instance, that a man is like an egg. Every time I *see* the same man I *see* an egg, yet it is not the same egg."

"But you won't be able to recognize anything, since nothing is the same; so what's the advantage of learning to *see?*"

"You can tell things apart. You can see them for what they really are."

"Don't I see things as they really are?"

"No. Your eyes have learned only to look. Take, for example, the three people you encountered, the three Mexicans. You have described them in detail, and even told me what clothes they wore. And that only proved to me that you didn't *see* them at all. If you were capable of *seeing* you would have known on the spot that they were not people."

"They were not people? What were they?"

"They were not people, that's all."

"But that's impossible. They were just like you and me."

"No, they were not. I'm sure of it."

I asked him if they were ghosts, spirits, or the souls of dead people. His reply was that he did not know what ghosts, spirits, and souls were.

I translated for him the Webster's New World Dictionary definition of the word ghost: "The supposed disembodied spirit of a dead person, conceived of as appearing to the living as a pale, shadowy apparition." And then the definition of spirit: "A supernatural being, especially one thought of . . . as a ghost, or as inhabiting a certain region, being of a certain (good or evil) character."

He said they could perhaps be called spirits, although the definition I had read was not quite adequate to describe them.

"Are they guardians of some sort?" I asked.

"No. They don't guard anything."

"Are they overseers? Are they watching over us?"

"They are forces, neither good nor bad, just forces that a brujo learns to harness."

"Are they the allies, don Juan?"

"Yes, they are the allies of a man of knowledge."

This was the first time in the eight years of our association that don Juan had come close to defining an "ally." I must have asked him to do so dozens of times. He usually disregarded my question, saying that I knew what an ally was and that it was stupid to voice what I already knew. Don Juan's direct statement about the nature of an ally was a novelty and I was compelled to probe him.

"You told me the allies were in the plants," I said, "in the jimson weed and in the mushrooms."

"I've never told you that," he said with great conviction. "You always jump to your own conclusions."

"But I wrote it down in my notes, don Juan."

"You may write whatever you want, but don't tell me I said that."

I reminded him that he had at first told me his benefactor's ally was the jimson weed and his own ally was the little smoke; and that he had later clarified it by saying that the ally was contained in each plant.

"No. That's not correct," he said, frowning. "My ally is the little smoke, but that doesn't mean that my ally is in the smoking mixture, or in the mushrooms, or in my pipe. They all have to be put together to get me to the ally, and that ally I call little smoke for reasons of my own."

Don Juan said that the three people I had seen, whom he called "those who are not people"—*los qué no son gente*—were in reality don Vicente's allies.

I reminded him that he had established that the difference between an ally and Mescalito was that an ally could not be seen, while one could easily see Mescalito.

We involved ourselves in a long discussion then. He said that he had established the idea that an ally could not be seen because an ally adopted any form. When I pointed out that

he had once also said that Mescalito adopted any form, don Juan dropped the whole conversation, saying that the "seeing" to which he was referring was not the ordinary "looking at things" and that my confusion stemmed from my insistence on talking.

Hours later don Juan himself started back again on the topic of the allies. I had felt he was somehow annoyed by my questions so I had not pressed him any further. He was showing me then how to make a trap for rabbits; I had to hold a long stick and bend it as far as possible so he could tie a string around the ends. The stick was fairly thin but still demanded considerable strength to bend. My head and arms were shivering with the exertion and I was nearly exhausted when he finally tied the string.

We sat down and he began to talk. He said it was obvious to him that I could not comprehend anything unless I talked about it, and that he did not mind my questions and was going to tell me about the allies.

"The ally is not in the smoke," he said. "The smoke takes you to where the ally is, and when you become one with the ally you don't ever have to smoke again. From then on you can summon your ally at will and make him do anything you want.

"The allies are neither good nor evil, but are put to use by the sorcerers for whatever purpose they see fit. I like the little smoke as an ally because it doesn't demand much of me. It's constant and fair."

"How does an ally look to you, don Juan? Those three people I saw, for instance, who looked like ordinary people to me; how would they look to you?"

"They would look like ordinary people."

"Then how can you tell them apart from real people?"

"Real people look like luminous eggs when you *see* them. Nonpeople always look like people. That's what I meant when I said you cannot *see* an ally. The allies take different forms. They look like dogs, coyotes, birds, even tumbleweeds, or anything else. The only difference is that when you *see* them they look just like what they're pretending to be. Everything has its own way of being when you *see*. Just like men look like eggs, other things look like something else, but the allies can be seen only in the form they are portraying. That form is good enough to fool the eyes; our eyes, that is. A dog is never fooled, neither is a crow."

"Why would they want to fool us?"

"I think we are the clowns. We fool ourselves. The allies just take the outward appearance of whatever is around and then we take them for what they are not. It is not their fault that we have taught our eyes only to look at things."

"I'm not clear about their function, don Juan. What do allies do in the world?"

"This is like asking me what we men do in the world. I really don't know. We are here, that's all. And the allies are here like us; and maybe they have been here before us."

"What do you mean before us, don Juan?"

"We men have not always been here."

"Do you mean here in this country or here in the world?"

We involved ourselves in another long argument at this point. Don Juan said that for him there was only the world, the place where he put his feet. I asked him how he knew that we had not always been in the world.

"Very simple," he said. "We men know very little about the world. A coyote knows much more than we do. A coyote is hardly ever fooled by the world's appearance."

"How come we can catch them and kill them?" I asked. "If

they are not fooled by appearances how come they die so easily?"

Don Juan stared at me until I became embarrassed.

"We may trap or poison or shoot a coyote," he said. "Any way we do it a coyote is an easy prey for us because he is not familiar with man's machinations. If the coyote survived, however, you could rest assured that we'd never catch up with him again. A good hunter knows that and never sets his trap twice on the same spot, because if a coyote dies in a trap, every coyote can *see* his death, which lingers on, and thus they will avoid the trap or even the general area where it was set. We, on the other hand, never *see* death, which lingers on the spot where one of our fellow men has died; we may suspect it, but we never *see* it."

"Can a coyote *see* an ally?"

"Certainly."

"How does an ally look to a coyote?"

"I would have to be a coyote to know that. I can tell you, however, that to a crow it looks like a pointed hat. Round and wide at the bottom, ending in a long point. Some of them shine, but the majority are dull and appear to be very heavy. They resemble a dripping piece of cloth. They are foreboding shapes."

"How do they look to you when you *see* them, don Juan?"

"I've told you already; they look like whatever they're pretending to be. They take any shape or size that suits them. They could be shaped like a pebble or a mountain."

"Do they talk, or laugh, or make any noise?"

"In the company of men they behave like men. In the company of animals they behave like animals. Animals are usually afraid of them; however, if they are accustomed to seeing the allies, they leave them alone. We ourselves do something similar. We have scores of allies among us, but we don't

bother them. Since our eyes can only look at things, we don't notice them."

"Do you mean that some of the people I see in the street are not really people?" I asked, truly bewildered by his statement.

"Some of them are not," he said emphatically.

His statement seemed preposterous to me, yet I could not seriously conceive of don Juan's making such a remark purely for effect. I told him it sounded like a science-fiction tale about beings from another planet. He said he did not care how it sounded, but some people in the street were not people. "Why must you think that every person in a moving crowd is a human being?" he asked with an air of utmost seriousness.

I really could not explain why, except that I was habituated to believe that as an act of sheer faith on my part.

He went on to say how much he liked to watch busy places with a lot of people, and how he would sometimes *see* a crowd of men who looked like eggs, and among the mass of egg-like creatures he would spot one who looked just like a person.

"It's very enjoyable to do that," he said, laughing, "or at least it's enjoyable for me. I like to sit in parks and bus depots and watch. Sometimes I can spot an ally right away; at other times I can *see* only real people. Once I saw two allies sitting in a bus, side by side. That's the only time in my life I have seen two together."

"Did it have a special significance for you to see two of them?"

"Certainly. Anything they do is significant. From their actions a brujo can sometimes draw his power. Even if a brujo does not have an ally of his own, as long as he knows how to *see*, he can handle power by watching the acts of the allies. My benefactor taught me to do that, and for years before I had my own ally I watched for allies among crowds of people

and every time I *saw* one it taught me something. You found three together. What a magnificent lesson you wasted."

He did not say anything else until we had finished assembling the rabbit trap. Then he turned to me and said suddenly, as if he had just remembered it, that another important thing about the allies was that if one found two of them they were always two of the same kind. The two allies he saw were two men, he said; and since I had seen two men and one woman he concluded that my experience was even more unusual.

I asked if the allies could portray children; if the children could be of the same or of different sex; if the allies portrayed people of different races; if they could portray a family composed of a man, a woman, and a child; and finally I asked him if he had ever seen an ally driving a car or a bus.

Don Juan did not answer at all. He smiled and let me do the talking. When he heard my last question he burst out laughing and said that I was being careless with my questions, that it would have been more appropriate to ask if he had ever *seen* an ally driving a motor vehicle.

"You don't want to forget the motorcycles, do you?" he said with a mischievous glint in his eye.

I thought his making fun of my questions was funny and lighthearted and I laughed with him.

Then he explained that the allies could not take the lead or act upon anything directly; they could, however, act upon man in an indirect way. Don Juan said that coming in contact with an ally was dangerous because the ally was capable of bringing out the worst in a person. The apprenticeship was long and arduous, he said, because one had to reduce to a minimum all that was unnecessary in one's life, in order to withstand the impact of such an encounter. Don Juan said that his benefactor, when he first came in contact with an ally,

was driven to burn himself and was scarred as if a mountain lion had mauled him. In his own case, he said, an ally pushed him into a pile of burning wood, and he burned himself a little on the knee and shoulder blade, but the scars disappeared in time, when he became one with the ally.

3

On June 10, 1968, I started on a long journey with don Juan to participate in a mitote. I had been waiting for this opportunity for months, yet I was not really sure I wanted to go. I thought my hesitation was due to my fear that at a peyote meeting I would have to ingest peyote, and I had no intention whatsoever of doing that. I had repeatedly expressed those feelings to don Juan. He laughed patiently at first, but finally he firmly stated that he did not want to hear one more thing about my fear.

As far as I was concerned, a mitote was ideal ground for me to verify the schemata I had constructed. For one thing, I had never completely abandoned the idea that a covert leader was necessary at such a meeting in order to insure agreement among the participants. Somehow I had the feeling that don Juan had discarded my idea for reasons of his own, since he deemed it more efficacious to explain everything that took place at a *mitote* in terms of "seeing." I thought that my interest in finding a suitable explanation in my own terms was not in accordance with what he himself wanted me to do; therefore he had to discard my rationale, as he was accustomed to doing with whatever did not conform to his system.

Right before we started on the journey don Juan eased my apprehension about having to ingest peyote by telling me that I was attending the meeting only to watch. I felt elated. At that time I was almost certain I was going to discover the covert procedure by which the participants arrive at an agreement.

It was late afternoon when we left; the sun was almost on the horizon; I felt it on my neck and wished I had a venetian blind in the rear window of my car. From the top of a hill I could see down into a huge valley; the road was like a black ribbon laid flat over the ground, up and down innumerable hills. I followed it with my eyes for a moment before we began descending; it ran due south until it disappeared over a range of low mountains in the distance.

Don Juan sat quietly, looking straight ahead. We had not said a word for a long time. It was uncomfortably warm inside the car. I had opened all the windows, but that did not help because it was an extremely hot day. I felt very annoyed and restless. I began to complain about the heat.

Don Juan frowned and looked at me quizzically.

"It's hot all over Mexico this time of the year," he said. "There is nothing one can do about it."

I did not look at him, but I knew he was gazing at me. The car picked up speed going down the slope. I vaguely saw a highway sign, *Vado*—dip. When I actually saw the dip I was going quite fast, and although I did slow down, we still felt the impact and bobbed up and down on the seats. I reduced the speed considerably; we were going through an area where livestock grazed freely on the sides of the road, an area where the carcass of a horse or a cow run down by a car was a common sight. At a certain point I had to stop completely to let some horses cross the highway. I was getting more restless and annoyed. I told don Juan that it was the heat; I said

that I had always disliked the heat since my childhood, because every summer I used to feel suffocated and I could hardly breathe.

"You're not a child now," he said.

"The heat still suffocates me."

"Well, hunger used to suffocate me when I was a child," he said softly. "To be very hungry was the only thing I knew as a child, and I used to swell up until I could not breathe either. But that was when I was a child. I cannot suffocate now, neither can I swell like a toad when I am hungry."

I didn't know what to say. I felt I was getting myself into an untenable position and soon I would have to defend a point I really didn't care to defend. The heat was not that bad. What disturbed me was the prospect of driving for over a thousand miles to our destination. I felt annoyed at the thought of having to exert myself.

"Let's stop and get something to eat," I said. "Maybe it won't be so hot once the sun goes down."

Don Juan looked at me, smiling, and said that there were not any clean towns for a long stretch and that he had understood my policy was not to eat from the stands on the roadside.

"Don't you fear diarrhea any more?" he asked.

I knew he was being sarcastic, yet he kept an inquisitive and at the same time serious look on his face.

"The way you act," he said, "one would think that diarrhea is lurking out there, waiting for you to step out of the car to jump you. You're in a terrible fix; if you escape the heat, diarrhea will eventually get you."

Don Juan's tone was so serious that I began to laugh. Then we drove in silence for a long time. When we arrived at a highway stop for trucks called Los Vidrios—Glass—it was already quite dark.

Don Juan shouted from the car, "What do you have to eat today?"

"Pork meat," a woman shouted back from inside.

"I hope for your sake that the pig was run down on the road today," don Juan said to me, laughing.

We got out of the car. The road was flanked on both sides by ranges of low mountains that seemed to be the solidified lava of some gigantic volcanic eruption. In the darkness the black, jagged peaks were silhouetted against the sky like huge menacing walls of glass slivers.

While we ate I told don Juan that I could see the reason why the place was called Glass. I said that to me the name was obviously due to the glass-sliver shape of the mountains.

Don Juan said in a convincing tone that the place was called Los Vidrios because a truck loaded with glass had overturned on that spot and the glass shreds were left lying around the road for years.

I felt he was being facetious and asked him to tell me if that was the real reason.

"Why don't you ask someone here?" he said.

I asked a man who was sitting at a table next to ours; he said apologetically that he didn't know. I went into the kitchen and asked the women there if they knew, but they all said they didn't; that the place was just called Glass.

"I believe I'm right," don Juan said in a low voice. "Mexicans are not given to noticing things around them. I'm sure they can't see the glass mountains, but they surely can leave a mountain of glass shreds lying around for years."

We both found the image funny and laughed.

When we had finished eating don Juan asked me how I felt. I told him fine, but I really felt somewhat queasy. Don Juan gave me a steadfast look and seemed to detect my feeling of discomfort.

"Once you decided to come to Mexico you should have put all your petty fears away," he said very sternly. "Your decision to come should have vanquished them. You came because you wanted to come. That's the warrior's way. I have told you time and time again, the most effective way to live is as a warrior. Worry and think before you make any decision, but once you make it, be on your way free from worries or thoughts; there will be a million other decisions still awaiting you. That's the warrior's way."

"I believe I do that, don Juan, at least some of the time. It's very hard to keep on reminding myself, though."

"A warrior thinks of his death when things become unclear."

"That's even harder, don Juan. For most people death is very vague and remote. We never think of it."

"Why not?"

"Why should we?"

"Very simple," he said. "Because the idea of death is the only thing that tempers our spirit."

By the time we left Los Vidrios it was so dark that the jagged silhouette of the mountains had merged into the darkness of the sky. We drove in silence for more than an hour. I felt tired. It was as though I didn't want to talk because there was nothing to talk about. The traffic was minimal. Few cars passed by from the opposite direction. It seemed as if we were the only people going south on the highway. I thought that was strange and I kept on looking in the rear-view mirror to see if there were other cars coming from behind, but there were none.

After a while I stopped looking for cars and began to dwell again on the prospect of our trip. Then I noticed that my headlights seemed extremely bright in contrast with the darkness all around and I looked again in the rear-view mirror. I

saw a bright glare first and then two points of light that seemed to have emerged from the ground. They were the headlights of a car on a hilltop in the distance behind us. They remained visible for a while, then they disappeared into the darkness as if they had been scooped away; after a moment they appeared on another hilltop, and then they disappeared again. I followed their appearances and disappearances in the mirror for a long time. At one point it occurred to me that the car was gaining on us. It was definitely closing in. The lights were bigger and brighter. I deliberately stepped on the gas pedal. I had a sensation of uneasiness. Don Juan seemed to notice my concern, or perhaps he was only noticing that I was speeding up. He looked at me first, then he turned around and looked at the distant headlights.

He asked me if there was something wrong with me. I told him that I had not seen any cars behind us for hours and that suddenly I had noticed the lights of a car that seemed to be gaining on us all the time.

He chuckled and asked me if I really thought it was a car. I told him that it had to be a car and he said that my concern revealed to him that, somehow, I must have felt that whatever was behind us was something more than a mere car. I insisted that I thought it was just another car on the highway, or perhaps a truck.

"What else can it be?" I said loudly.

Don Juan's probing had put me on edge.

He turned and looked straight at me, then he nodded slowly, as if measuring what he was going to say.

"Those are the lights on the head of death," he said softly. "Death puts them on like a hat and then shoots off on a gallop. Those are the lights of death on the gallop gaining on us, getting closer and closer."

A chill ran up my back. After a while I looked in the rear-view mirror again, but the lights were not there any more.

I told don Juan that the car must have stopped or turned off the road. He did not look back; he just stretched his arms and yawned.

"No," he said. "Death never stops. Sometimes it turns off its lights, that's all."

We arrived in northeastern Mexico June 13. Two old Indian women, who looked alike and seemed to be sisters, and four girls were gathered at the door of a small adobe house. There was a hut behind the house and a dilapidated barn that had only part of its roof and one wall left. The women were apparently waiting for us; they must have spotted my car by the dust it raised on the dirt road after I left the paved highway a couple of miles away. The house was in a deep valley, and viewed from the door the highway looked like a long scar high up on the side of the green hills.

Don Juan got out of the car and talked with the old women for a moment. They pointed to some wooden stools in front of the door. Don Juan signaled me to come over and sit down. One of the old women sat with us; the rest went inside the house. Two of the girls remained by the door, examining me with curiosity. I waved at them; they giggled and ran inside. After a few minutes two young men came over and greeted don Juan. They did not speak to me or even look at me. They talked to don Juan briefly; then he got up and all of us, including the women, walked to another house, perhaps half a mile away.

We met there with another group of people. Don Juan went inside but told me to stay by the door. I looked in and saw an old Indian man around don Juan's age sitting on a wooden stool.

It was not quite dark. A group of young Indian men and women were standing quietly around an old truck parked in front of the house. I talked to them in Spanish but they de-

liberately avoided answering me; the women giggled every time I said something and the men smiled politely and turned their eyes away. It was as if they did not understand me, yet I was sure all of them spoke Spanish because I had heard them talking among themselves.

After a while don Juan and the other old man came out and got into the truck and sat next to the driver. That appeared to be a signal for everyone to climb onto the flatbed of the truck. There were no side railings, and when the truck began to move we all hung onto a long rope that was tied to some hooks on the chassis.

The truck moved slowly on the dirt road. At one point, on a very steep slope, it stopped and everybody jumped down and walked behind it; then two young men hopped onto the flatbed again and sat on the edge without using the rope. The women laughed and encouraged them to maintain their precarious position. Don Juan and the old man, who was referred to as don Silvio, walked together and did not seem to be concerned with the young men's histrionics. When the road leveled off everybody got on the truck again.

We rode for about an hour. The floor was extremely hard and uncomfortable, so I stood up and held onto the roof of the cab and rode that way until we stopped in front of a group of shacks. There were more people there; it was very dark by then and I could see only a few of them in the dim, yellowish light of a kerosene lantern that hung by an open door.

Everybody got off the truck and mingled with the people in the houses. Don Juan told me again to stay outside. I leaned against the front fender of the truck and after a minute or two I was joined by three young men. I had met one of them four years before at a previous mitote. He embraced me by grabbing my forearms.

"You're fine," he whispered to me in Spanish.

We stayed very quietly by the truck. It was a warm, windy night. I could hear the soft rumble of a stream close by. My friend asked me in a whisper if I had any cigarettes. I passed a pack around. By the glow of the cigarettes I looked at my watch. It was nine o'clock.

A group of people emerged from inside the house soon afterwards and the three young men walked away. Don Juan came over to me and told me that he had explained my presence to everybody's satisfaction and that I was welcome to come and serve water at the mitote. He said we would be going right away.

A group of ten women and eleven men left the house. The man heading the party was rather husky; he was perhaps in his mid-fifties. They called him "Mocho," a nickname which means "cropped." He moved with brisk, firm steps. He carried a kerosene lantern and waved it from side to side as he walked. At first I thought he was moving it at random, but then I discovered that he waved the lantern to mark an obstacle or a difficult pass on the road. We walked for over an hour. The women chatted and laughed softly from time to time. Don Juan and the other old man were at the head of the line; I was at the very tail end of it. I kept my eyes down on the road, trying to see where I was walking.

It had been four years since don Juan and I had been in the hills at night, and I had lost a great deal of physical prowess. I kept stumbling and involuntarily kicking small rocks. My knees did not have any flexibility; the road seemed to come up at me when I encountered a high spot, or it seemed to give in under me when I hit a low spot. I was the noisiest walker and that made me into an unwilling clown. Someone in the group said, "Woo," every time I stumbled and everyone laughed. At one point, one of the rocks I kicked hit a woman's

heel and she said out loud, to everyone's delight, "Give a candle to that poor boy!" But the final mortification was when I tripped and had to hold onto the person in front of me; he nearly lost his balance with my weight on him and let out a deliberate scream that was out of all proportion. Everyone laughed so hard that the whole group had to stop for a while.

At a certain moment the man who was leading jerked his lantern up and down. It seemed that was the sign we had arrived at our destination. There was a dark silhouette of a low house to my right, a short distance away. Everyone in the group scrambled in different directions. I looked for don Juan. It was difficult to find him in the darkness. I stumbled noisily for a while before noticing that he was sitting on a rock.

He again told me that my duty was to bring water for the men who were going to participate. He had taught me the procedure years before. I remembered every detail of it but he insisted on refreshing my memory and showed me again how to do it.

Afterwards we walked to the back of the house where all the men had gathered. They had built a fire. There was a cleared area covered with straw mats perhaps fifteen feet away from the fire. Mocho, the man who had led us, sat on a mat first; I noticed that the upper edge of his left ear was missing, which accounted for his nickname. Don Silvio sat to his right and don Juan to his left. Mocho was sitting facing the fire. A young man advanced toward him and placed a flat basket with peyote buttons in front of him; then the young man sat down between Mocho and don Silvio. Another young man carried two small baskets and placed them next to the peyote buttons and then sat between Mocho and don Juan. Then two other young men flanked don Silvio and don Juan, closing a circle of seven persons. The women remained inside the house. Two young men were in charge of keeping the fire

burning all night, and one teenager and I kept the water that was going to be given to the seven participants after their all-night ritual. The boy and I sat by a rock. The fire and the receptacle with water were opposite each other and at an equal distance from the circle of participants.

Mocho, the headman, sang his peyote song; his eyes were closed; his body bobbed up and down. It was a very long song. I did not understand the language. Then all of them, one by one, sang their peyote songs. They did not seem to follow any preconceived order. They apparently sang whenever they felt like doing it. Then Mocho held the basket with peyote buttons, took two of them, and placed it back again in the center of the circle; don Silvio was next and then don Juan. The four young men, who seemed to be a separate unit, took two peyote buttons each, following a counter-clockwise direction.

Each of the seven participants sang and ate two peyote buttons four consecutive times, then they passed the other two baskets, which contained dried fruit and meat.

They repeated this cycle at various times during the night, yet I could not detect any underlying order to their individual movements. They did not speak to one another; they seemed rather to be by themselves and to themselves. I did not see any of them, not even once, paying attention to what the other men were doing.

Before daybreak they got up and the young man and I gave them water. Afterwards I walked around to orient myself. The house was a one-room shack, a low adobe construction with a thatched roof. The scenery that surrounded it was quite oppressive. The shack was located in a harsh plain with mixed vegetation. Shrubs and cacti grew together, but there were no trees at all. I did not feel like venturing beyond the house.

The women left during the morning. The men moved silently in the area immediately surrounding the house. Around midday all of us sat down again in the same order we had sat the night before. A basket with pieces of dried meat cut to the same size as a peyote button was passed around. Some of the men sang their peyote songs. After an hour or so all of them stood up and went off in different directions.

The women had left a pot of gruel for the fire and water attendants. I ate some of it and then I slept most of the afternoon.

After dark the young men in charge of the fire built another one and the cycle of intaking peyote buttons began again. It followed roughly the same order as the preceding night, ending at daybreak.

During the course of the night I struggled to observe and record every single movement performed by each of the seven participants, in hopes of discovering the slightest form of a detectable system of verbal or nonverbal communication among them. There was nothing in their actions, however, that revealed an underlying system.

In the early evening the cycle of intaking peyote was renewed. By morning I knew that I had completely failed to find clues that would point out the covert leader, or to discover any form of covert communication among them or any traces of their system of agreement. For the rest of the day I sat by myself and tried to arrange my notes.

When the men gathered again for the fourth night I knew somehow that this was to be the last meeting. Nobody had mentioned anything about it to me, yet I knew they would disband the next day. I sat by the water again and everyone else resumed his position in the order that had already been established.

The behavior of the seven men in the circle was a replica of

what I had observed during the three previous nights. I became absorbed in their movements as I had done before. I wanted to record everything they did, every movement, every utterance, every gesture.

At a certain moment I heard a sort of beep in my ear; it was a common sort of buzzing in the ear and I did not pay attention to it. The beep became louder, yet it was still within the range of my ordinary bodily sensations. I remembered dividing my attention between watching the men and listening to the buzzing I was hearing. Then, at a given instant, the faces of the men seemed to become brighter; it was as if a light had been turned on. But it was not quite like an electric light, or a lantern, or the reflection of the fire on their faces. It was rather an iridescence; a pink luminosity, very tenuous, yet detectable from where I was. The buzzing seemed to increase. I looked at the teenage boy who was with me but he had fallen asleep.

The pink luminosity became more noticeable by then. I looked at don Juan; his eyes were closed; so were don Silvio's and so were Mocho's. I could not see the eyes of the four younger men because two of them were bent forward and the other two had their backs turned to me.

I became even more involved in watching. Yet I had not fully realized that I was actually hearing a buzzing and was actually seeing a pinkish glow hovering over the men. After a moment I became aware that the tenuous pink light and the buzzing were very steady. I had a moment of intense bewilderment and then a thought crossed my mind, a thought that had nothing to do with the scene I was witnessing, nor with the purpose I had in mind for being there. I remembered something my mother had told me once when I was a child. The thought was distracting and very inappropriate; I tried to discard it and involve myself again in my assiduous watching, but

I could not do it. The thought recurred; it was stronger, more demanding, and then I clearly heard my mother's voice calling me. I heard the shuffling of her slippers and then her laughter. I turned around looking for her; I conceived that I was going to be transported in time by some sort of hallucination or mirage and I was going to see her, but I saw only the boy sleeping beside me. To see him jolted me and I experienced a brief moment of ease, of sobriety.

I looked again at the group of men. They had not changed their positions at all. However, the luminosity was gone, and so was the buzzing in my ears. I felt relieved. I thought that the hallucination of hearing my mother's voice was over. Her voice had been so clear and vivid. I said to myself over and over that for an instant the voice had almost trapped me. I noticed vaguely that don Juan was looking at me, but that did not matter. It was the memory of my mother's voice calling me that was mesmerizing. I struggled desperately to think about something else. And then I heard her voice again, as clearly as if she had been behind me. She called my name. I turned quickly, but all I saw was the dark silhouette of the shack and the shrubs beyond it.

Hearing my name caused me the most profound anguish. I whined involuntarily. I felt cold and very lonely and I began to weep. At that moment I had the sensation that I needed someone to care for me. I turned my head to look at don Juan; he was staring at me. I did not want to see him so I closed my eyes. And then I saw my mother. It was not the thought of my mother, the way I think of her ordinarily. This was a clear vision of her, standing by me. I felt desperate. I was trembling and wanted to escape. The vision of my mother was too disturbing, too alien to what I was pursuing in that peyote meeting. There was apparently no conscious way to avoid it. Perhaps I could have opened my eyes if I really wanted the vision to vanish, but instead I examined it in detail. My examination

was more than merely looking at her; it was a compulsive scrutiny and assessment. A very peculiar feeling enveloped me as if it were an outside force, and I suddenly felt the horrendous burden of my mother's love. When I heard my name I was torn apart; the memory of my mother filled me with anguish and melancholy, but when I examined her I knew that I had never liked her. This was a shocking realization. Thoughts and images came to me as an avalanche. The vision of my mother must have vanished in the meantime; it was no longer important. I was no longer interested in what the Indians were doing either. In fact I had forgotten the mitote. I was absorbed in a series of extraordinary thoughts, extraordinary because they were more than thoughts; these were complete units of feeling that were emotional certainties, indisputable evidences about the nature of my relationship with my mother.

At a certain moment these extraordinary thoughts ceased to come. I noticed that they had lost their fluidity and their quality of being complete units of feeling. I had begun to think about other things. My mind was rambling. I thought of other members of my immediate family, but there were no images to accompany my thoughts. Then I looked at don Juan. He was standing; the rest of the men were also standing, and then they all walked toward the water. I moved aside and nudged the boy who was still asleep.

I related to don Juan the sequence of my astounding vision almost as soon as he got into my car. He laughed with great delight and said that my vision was a sign, an omen as important as my first experience with Mescalito. I remembered that don Juan had interpreted the reactions I had when I first ingested peyote as an all-important omen; in fact he decided to teach me his knowledge because of it.

Don Juan said that during the last night of the mitote Mes-

calito had hovered over me so obviously that everyone was forced to turn toward me, and that was why he was staring at me when I looked at him.

I wanted to hear his interpretation of my vision, but he did not want to talk about it. He said that whatever I had experienced was nonsense in comparison to the omen.

Don Juan kept on talking about Mescalito's light hovering over me and how everyone had seen it.

"That was really something," he said. "I couldn't possibly ask for a better omen."

Don Juan and I were obviously on two different avenues of thought. He was concerned with the importance of the events he had interpreted as an omen and I was obsessed with the details of the vision I had had.

"I don't care about omens," I said. "I want to know what happened to me."

He frowned as if he were upset and remained very stiff and quiet for a moment. Then he looked at me. His tone was very forceful. He said that the only important issue was that Mescalito had been very gentle with me, had engulfed me with his light and had given me a lesson with no other effort on my part than being around.

4

On September 4, 1968, I went to Sonora to visit don Juan. Following a request he had made during my previous visit to him, I stopped on the way, in Hermosillo, to buy him a non-commercial tequila called *bacanora.* His request seemed very odd to me at the time, since I knew he disliked drinking, but I bought four bottles and put them in a box along with other things I had brought for him.

"Why, you got four bottles!" he said, laughing, when he opened the box. "I asked you to buy me one. I believe you thought the *bacanora* was for me, but it's for my grandson Lucio, and you have to give it to him as though it's a personal gift of your own."

I had met don Juan's grandson two years before; he was twenty-eight years old then. He was very tall, over six feet, and was always extravagantly well dressed for his means and in comparison to his peers. While the majority of Yaquis wear khakis and Levis, straw hats, and homemade sandals called *guaraches,* Lucio's outfit was an expensive black leather jacket with frills of turquoise beads, a Texan cowboy hat, and a pair of boots that were monogrammed and hand decorated.

Lucio was delighted to receive the liquor and immediately took the bottles inside his house, apparently to put them away.

Don Juan made a casual comment that one should never hoard liquor and drink alone. Lucio said he was not really hoarding, but was putting it away until that evening, at which time he was going to invite his friends to drink with him.

That evening around seven o'clock I returned to Lucio's place. It was dark. I made out the vague silhouette of two people standing under a small tree; it was Lucio and one of his friends, who were waiting for me and guided me to the house with a flashlight.

Lucio's house was a flimsy, two-room, dirt-floor, wattle-and-daub construction. It was perhaps twenty feet long and was supported by relatively thin beams of the mesquite tree. It had, as all the houses of the Yaquis have, a flat, thatched roof and a nine-foot-wide *ramada*, which is a sort of awning over the entire front part of the house. A *ramada* roof is never thatched; it is made of branches arranged in a loose fashion, giving enough shade and yet permitting the cooling breeze to circulate freely.

As I entered the house I turned on my tape recorder, which I kept inside my brief case. Lucio introduced me to his friends. There were eight men inside the house, including don Juan. They were sitting casually around the center of the room under the bright light of a gasoline lantern that hung from a beam. Don Juan was sitting on a box. I sat facing him at the end of a six-foot bench made with a thick wooden beam nailed on two prongs planted in the ground.

Don Juan had placed his hat on the floor beside him. The light of the gasoline lantern made his short white hair look more brilliantly white. I looked at his face; the light had also enhanced the deep wrinkles on his neck and forehead, and made him look darker and older.

I looked at the other men; under the greenish-white light of the gasoline lantern all of them looked tired and old.

Lucio addressed the whole group in Spanish and said in a loud voice that we were going to drink one bottle of *bacanora* that I had brought for him from Hermosillo. He went into the other room, brought out a bottle, uncorked it, and gave it to me along with a small tin cup. I poured a very small amount into the cup and drank it. The *bacanora* seemed to be more fragrant and more dense than regular tequila, and stronger too. It made me cough. I passed the bottle and everyone poured himself a small drink, everyone except don Juan; he just took the bottle and placed it in front of Lucio, who was at the end of the line.

All of them made lively comments about the rich flavor of that particular bottle, and all of them agreed that the liquor must have come from the high mountains of Chihuahua.

The bottle went around a second time. The men smacked their lips, repeated their statements of praise, and engaged themselves in a lively discussion about the noticeable differences between the tequila made around Guadalajara and that made at a high altitude in Chihuahua.

During the second time around don Juan again did not drink and I poured only a dab for myself, but the rest of them filled the cup to the brim. The bottle went around once more and was finished.

"Get the other bottles, Lucio," don Juan said.

Lucio seemed to vacillate, and don Juan quite casually explained to the others that I had brought four bottles for Lucio.

Benigno, a young man of Lucio's age, looked at the brief case that I had placed inconspicuously behind me and asked if I was a tequila salesman. Don Juan answered that I was not, and that I had really come to Sonora to see him.

"Carlos is learning about Mescalito, and I'm teaching him," don Juan said.

All of them looked at me and smiled politely. Bajea, the

woodcutter, a small, thin man with sharp features, looked at me fixedly for a moment and then said that the storekeeper had accused me of being a spy from an American company that was planning to do mining in the Yaqui land. They all reacted as if they were indignant at such an accusation. Besides, they all resented the storekeeper, who was a Mexican, or a *Yori* as the Yaquis say.

Lucio went into the other room and returned with another bottle of *bacanora*. He opened it, poured himself a large drink, and then passed it around. The conversation drifted to the probabilities of the American company coming to Sonora and its possible effect on the Yaquis. The bottle went back to Lucio. He lifted it and looked at its contents to see how much was left.

"Tell him not to worry," don Juan whispered to me. "Tell him you'll bring him more next time you come around."

I leaned over to Lucio and assured him that on my next visit I was going to bring him at least half a dozen bottles.

At one moment the topics of conversation seemed to wane away.

Don Juan turned to me and said loudly, "Why don't you tell the guys here about your encounters with Mescalito? I think that'll be much more interesting than this idle chat about what will happen if the American company comes to Sonora."

"Is Mescalito peyote, Grandpa?" Lucio asked curiously.

"Some people call it that way," don Juan said dryly. "I prefer to call it Mescalito."

"That confounded thing causes madness," said Genaro, a tall, husky, middle-aged man.

"I think it's stupid to say that Mescalito causes madness," don Juan said softly. "Because if that were the case, Carlos would be in a strait-jacket this very moment instead of being here talking to you. He has taken it and look at him. He is fine."

Bajea smiled and replied shyly, "Who can tell?" and everybody laughed.

"Look at me then," don Juan said. "I've known Mescalito nearly all my life and it has never hurt me."

The men did not laugh, but it was obvious that they were not taking him seriously.

"On the other hand," don Juan went on, "it's true that Mescalito drives people crazy, as you said, but that's only when they come to him without knowing what they're doing."

Esquere, an old man who seemed to be don Juan's age, chuckled softly as he shook his head from side to side.

"What do you mean by 'knowing,' Juan?" he asked. "The last time I saw you, you were saying the same thing."

"People go really crazy when they take that peyote stuff," Genaro continued. "I've seen the Huichol Indians eating it. They acted as if they had rabies. They frothed and puked and pissed all over the place. You could get epilepsy from taking that confounded thing. That's what Mr. Salas, the government engineer, told me once. And epilepsy is for life, you know."

"That's being worse than animals," Bajea added solemnly.

"You saw only what you wanted to see about the Huichol Indians, Genaro," don Juan said. "For one thing, you never took the trouble of finding out from them what it's like to get acquainted with Mescalito. Mescalito has never made anyone epileptic, to my knowledge. The government engineer is a Yori and I doubt that a Yori knows anything about it. You really don't think that all the thousands of people who know Mescalito are crazy, do you?"

"They must be crazy, or pretty nearly so, to do a thing like that," answered Genaro.

"But if all those thousands of people were crazy at the same time who would do their work? How would they manage to survive?" don Juan asked.

"Macario, who comes from the 'other side' "—the U.S.A.—

"told me that whoever takes it there is marked for life," Esquere said.

"Macario is lying if he says that," don Juan said. "I'm sure he doesn't know what he's talking about."

"He really tells too many lies," said Benigno.

"Who's Macario?" I asked.

"He's a Yaqui Indian who lives here," Lucio said. "He says he's from Arizona and that he was in Europe during the war. He tells all kinds of stories."

"He says he was a colonel!" Benigno said.

Everyone laughed and the conversaton shifted for a while to Macario's unbelievable tales, but don Juan returned again to the topic of Mescalito.

"If all of you know that Macario is a liar, how can you believe him when he talks about Mescalito?"

"Do you mean peyote, Grandpa?" Lucio asked, as if he were really struggling to make sense out of the term.

"God damn it! Yes!"

Don Juan's tone was sharp and abrupt. Lucio recoiled involuntarily, and for a moment I felt they were all afraid. Then don Juan smiled broadly and continued in a mild tone.

"Don't you fellows see that Macario doesn't know what he's talking about? Don't you see that in order to talk about Mescalito one has to know?"

"There you go again," Esquere said. "What the hell is this knowledge? You are worse than Macario. At least he says what's on his mind, whether he knows it or not. For years I've been listening to you say we have to know. What do we have to know?"

"Don Juan says there is a spirit in peyote," Benigno said.

"I have seen peyote in the field, but I have never seen spirits or anything of the sort," Bajea added.

"Mescalito is like a spirit, perhaps," don Juan explained. "But whatever he is doesn't become clear until one knows about him. Esquere complains that I have been saying this for years. Well, I have. But it's not my fault that you don't understand. Bajea says that whoever takes it becomes like an animal. Well, I don't see it that way. To me those who think they are above animals live worse than animals. Look at my grandson here. He works without rest. I would say he lives to work, like a mule. And all he does that is not animal-like is to get drunk."

Everybody laughed. Victor, a very young man who seemed to be still in adolescence, laughed in a pitch above everybody else.

Eligio, a young farmer, had not uttered a single word so far. He was sitting on the floor to my right, with his back against some sacks of chemical fertilizer that had been piled inside the house to protect them from the rain. He was one of Lucio's childhood friends, powerful looking and, although shorter than Lucio, more stocky and better built. Eligio seemed concerned about don Juan's words. Bajea was trying to come back with a comment, but Eligio interrupted him.

"In what way would peyote change all this?" he asked. "It seems to me that a man is born to work all his life, like mules do."

"Mescalito changes everything," don Juan said, "yet we still have to work like everybody else, like mules. I said there was a spirit inside Mescalito because it is something like a spirit which brings about the change in men. A spirit we can see and can touch, a spirit that changes us, sometimes even against our will."

"Peyote drives you out of your mind," Genaro said, "and then of course you believe you've changed. True?"

"How can it change us?" Eligio insisted.

"He teaches us the right way to live," don Juan said. "He helps and protects those who know him. The life you fellows are leading is no life at all. You don't know the happiness that comes from doing things deliberately. You don't have a protector!"

"What do you mean?" Genaro said indignantly. "We certainly have. Our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Mother the Virgin, and the little Virgin of Guadalupe. Aren't they our protectors?"

"Fine bunch of protectors!" don Juan said mockingly. "Have they taught you a better way to live?"

"That's because people don't listen to them," Genaro protested, "and they only pay attention to the devil."

"If they were real protectors they would force you to listen," don Juan said. "If Mescalito becomes your protector you will have to listen whether you like it or not, because you can see him and you must take heed of what he says. He will make you approach him with respect. Not the way you fellows are accustomed to approach your protectors."

"What do you mean, Juan?" Esquere asked.

"What I mean is that for you to come to your protectors means that one of you has to play a fiddle, and a dancer has to put on his mask and leggings and rattles and dance, while the rest of you drink. You, Benigno, you were a dancer once, tell us about it."

"I gave it up after three years," Benigno said. "It's hard work."

"Ask Lucio," Esquere said satirically. "He gave it up in one week!"

Everybody laughed except don Juan. Lucio smiled, seemingly embarrassed, and gulped down two huge swallows of *bacanora.*

"It is not hard, it is stupid," don Juan said. "Ask Valencio,

the dancer, if he enjoys dancing. He does not! He got accustomed to it, that's all. I've seen him dance for years, and every time I have, I've seen the same movements badly executed. He takes no pride in his art except when he talks about it. He has no love for it, therefore year after year he repeats the same motions. What was bad about his dancing at the beginning has become fixed. He cannot see it any longer."

"He was taught to dance that way," Eligio said. "I was also a dancer in the town of Torím. I know you must dance the way they teach you."

"Valencio is not the best dancer anyway," Esquere said. "There are others. How about Sacateca?"

"Sacateca is a man of knowledge, he is not in the same class with you fellows," don Juan said sternly. "He dances because that's the bent of his nature. All I wanted to say was that you, who are not dancers, do not enjoy it. Perhaps if the dances are well performed some of you will get pleasure. Not many of you know that much about dancing, though; therefore you are left with a very lousy piece of joy. This is why you fellows are all drunkards. Look at my grandson here!"

"Cut it out, Grandpa!" Lucio protested.

"He's not lazy or stupid," don Juan went on, "but what else does he do besides drink?"

"He buys leather jackets!" Genaro remarked, and the whole audience roared.

Lucio gulped down more *bacanora.*

"And how is peyote going to change that?" Eligio asked.

"If Lucio would seek the protector," don Juan said, "his life would be changed. I don't know exactly how, but I am sure it would be different."

"He would stop drinking, is that what you mean?" Eligio insisted.

"Perhaps he would. He needs something else beside tequila

to make his life satisfying. And that something, whatever it may be, might be provided by the protector."

"Then peyote must taste very good," Eligio said.

"I didn't say that," don Juan said.

"How in the hell are you going to enjoy it if it doesn't taste good?" Eligio said.

"It makes one enjoy life better," don Juan said.

"But if it doesn't taste good, how could it make us enjoy our lives better?" Eligio persisted. "It doesn't make sense."

"Of course it makes sense," Genaro said with conviction. "Peyote makes you crazy and naturally you think you're having a great time with your life, no matter what you do."

They all laughed again.

"It does make sense," don Juan proceeded, undisturbed, "if you think how little we know and how much more there is to see. Booze is what makes people crazy. It blurs the images. Mescalito, on the other hand, sharpens everything. It makes you see so very well. So very well!"

Lucio and Benigno looked at each other and smiled as though they had already heard the story before. Genaro and Esquere grew more impatient and began to talk at the same time. Victor laughed above all the other voices. The only one interested seemed to be Eligio.

"How can peyote do all that?" he asked.

"In the first place," don Juan explained, "you must want to become acquainted with him, and I think this is by far the most important thing. Then you must be offered to him, and you must meet with him many times before you can say you know him."

"And what happens then?" Eligio asked.

Genaro interrupted. "You crap on the roof with your ass on the ground."

The audience roared.

"What happens next is entirely up to you," don Juan went on without losing his self-control. "You must come to him without fear and, little by little, he will teach you how to live a better life."

There was a long pause. The men seemed to be tired. The bottle was empty. Lucio, with obvious reluctance, opened another.

"Is peyote Carlos' protector too?" Eligio asked in a joking tone.

"I wouldn't know that," don Juan said. "He has taken it three times, so ask him to tell you about it."

They all turned to me curiously and Eligio asked, "Did you really take it?"

"Yes. I did."

It seemed don Juan had won a round with his audience. They were either interested in hearing about my experience or too polite to laugh in my face.

"Didn't it hurt your mouth?" Lucio asked.

"It did. It also tasted terrible."

"Why did you take it, then?" Benigno asked.

I began to explain to them in elaborate terms that for a Western man don Juan's knowledge about peyote was one of the most fascinating things one could find. I said that everything he had said about it was true and that each one of us could verify that truth for ourselves.

I noticed that all of them were smiling as if they were concealing their contempt. I grew very embarrassed. I was aware of my awkwardness in conveying what I really had in mind. I talked for a while longer, but I had lost the impetus and only repeated what don Juan had already said.

Don Juan came to my aid and asked in a reassuring tone, "You were not looking for a protector when you first came to Mescalito, were you?"

I told them that I did not know that Mescalito could be a protector, and that I was moved only by my curiosity and a great desire to know him.

Don Juan reaffirmed that my intentions had been faultless and said that because of it Mescalito had had a beneficial effect on me.

"But it made you puke and piss all over the place, didn't it?" Genaro insisted.

I told him that it had in fact affected me in such a manner. They all laughed with restraint. I felt that they had become even more contemptuous of me. They didn't seem to be interested, except for Eligio, who was gazing at me.

"What did you see?" he asked.

Don Juan urged me to recount for them all or nearly all the salient details of my experiences, so I described the sequence and the form of what I had perceived. When I finished talking Lucio made a comment.

"If peyote is that weird, I'm glad I've never taken it."

"It is just like I said," Genaro said to Bajea. "That thing makes you insane."

"But Carlos is not insane now. How do you account for that?" don Juan asked Genaro.

"How do we know he isn't?" Genaro retorted.

They all broke out laughing, including don Juan.

"Were you afraid?" Benigno asked.

"I certainly was."

"Why did you do it, then?" Eligio asked.

"He said he wanted to know," Lucio answered for me. "I think Carlos is getting to be like my grandpa. Both have been saying they want to know, but nobody knows what in the hell they want to know."

"It is impossible to explain that knowing," don Juan said to Eligio, "because it is different for every man. The only thing

which is common to all of us is that Mescalito reveals his secrets privately to each man. Being aware of how Genaro feels, I don't recommend that he meet Mescalito. Yet in spite of my words or his feelings, Mescalito could have a totally beneficial effect on him. But only *he* could find out, and *that* is the knowing I have been talking about."

Don Juan got up. "It's time to go home," he said. "Lucio is drunk and Victor is asleep."

Two days later, on September 6, Lucio, Benigno, and Eligio came over to the house where I was staying to go hunting with me. They remained silent for a while as I kept on writing my notes. Then Benigno laughed politely as a warning that he was going to say something important.

After a preliminary embarrassing silence he laughed again and said, "Lucio here says that he would take peyote."

"Would you really?" I asked.

"Yes. I wouldn't mind it."

Benigno's laughter came in spurts.

"Lucio says he will eat peyote if you buy him a motorcycle."

Lucio and Benigno looked at each other and broke out laughing.

"How much is a motorcycle in the United States?" Lucio asked.

"You could probably get one for a hundred dollars," I said.

"That isn't very much there, is it? You could easily get it for him, couldn't you?" Benigno asked.

"Well, let me ask your grandpa first," I said to Lucio.

"No, no," he protested. "Don't mention it to him. He'll spoil everything. He's a weirdo. And besides, he's too old and feeble-minded and he doesn't know what he's doing."

"He was a real sorcerer once," Benigno added. "I mean a

real one. My folks say he was the best. But he took to peyote and became a nobody. Now he's too old."

"And he goes over and over the same crappy stories about peyote," Lucio said.

"That peyote is pure crap," Benigno said. "You know, we tried it once. Lucio got a whole sack of it from his grandpa. One night as we were going to town we chewed it. Son of a bitch! It cut my mouth to shreds. It tasted like hell!"

"Did you swallow it?" I asked.

"We spit it out," Lucio said, "and threw the whole damn sack away."

They both thought the incident was very funny. Eligio, in the meantime, had not said a word. He was withdrawn, as usual. He did not even laugh.

"Would you like to try it, Eligio?" I asked.

"No. Not me. Not even for a motorcycle."

Lucio and Benigno found the statement utterly funny and roared again.

"Nevertheless," Eligio continued, "I must admit that don Juan baffles me."

"My grandfather is too old to know anything," Lucio said with great conviction.

"Yeah, he's too old," Benigno echoed.

I thought the opinion the two young men had of don Juan was childish and unfounded. I felt it was my duty to defend his character and I told them that in my judgment don Juan was then, as he had been in the past, a great sorcerer, perhaps even the greatest of all. I said I felt there was something about him, something truly extraordinary. I urged them to remember that he was over seventy years old and yet he was more energetic and stronger than all of us put together. I challenged the young men to prove it to themselves by trying to sneak up on don Juan.

"You just can't sneak up on my grandpa," Lucio said proudly. "He's a brujo."

I reminded them that they had said he was too old and feeble-minded, and that a feeble-minded person does not know what goes on around him. I said that I had marveled at don Juan's alertness time and time again.

"No one can sneak up on a brujo, even if he's old," Benigno said with authority. "They can gang up on him when he's asleep, though. That's what happened to a man named Cevicas. People got tired of his evil sorcery and killed him."

I asked them to give me all the details of that event, but they said it had taken place before their time, or when they were still very young. Eligio added that people secretly believed that Cevicas had been only a fool, and that no one could harm a real sorcerer. I tried to question them further on their opinions about sorcerers. They did not seem to have much interest in the subject; besides, they were eager to start out and shoot the .22 rifle I had brought.

We were silent for a while as we walked toward the thick chaparral, then Eligio, who was at the head of the line, turned around and said to me, "Perhaps we're the crazy ones. Perhaps don Juan is right. Look at the way we live."

Lucio and Benigno protested. I tried to mediate. I agreed with Eligio and told them that I myself had felt that the way I lived was somehow wrong. Benigno said that I had no business complaining about my life, that I had money and I had a car. I retorted that I could easily say that they themselves were better off because each owned a piece of land. They responded in unison that the owner of their land was the federal bank. I told them that I did not own my car either, that a bank in California owned it, and that my life was only different but not better than theirs. By that time we were already in the dense shrubs.

We did not find any deer or wild boars, but we got three jack rabbits. On our return we stopped at Lucio's house and he announced that his wife was going to make rabbit stew. Benigno went to the store to buy a bottle of tequila and get us some sodas. When he came back don Juan was with him.

"Did you find my grandpa at the store buying beer?" Lucio asked laughing.

"I haven't been invited to this reunion," don Juan said. "I've just dropped by to ask Carlos if he's leaving for Hermosillo."

I told him I was planning to leave the next day, and while we talked Benigno distributed the bottles. Eligio gave his to don Juan, and since among the Yaquis it is deadly impolite to refuse, even as a courtesy, don Juan took it quietly. I gave mine to Eligio, and he was obliged to take it. So Benigno in turn gave me his bottle. But Lucio, who had obviously visualized the entire scheme of Yaqui good manners, had already finished drinking his soda. He turned to Benigno, who had a pathetic look on his face, and said, laughing, "They've screwed you out of your bottle."

Don Juan said he never drank soda and placed his bottle in Benigno's hands. We sat under the *ramada* in silence.

Eligio seemed to be nervous. He fidgeted with the brim of his hat.

"I've been thinking about what you said the other night," he said to don Juan. "How can peyote change our life? How?"

Don Juan did not answer. He stared fixedly at Eligio for a moment and then began to sing in Yaqui. It was not a song proper, but a short recitation. We remained quiet for a long time. Then I asked don Juan to translate the Yaqui words for me.

"That was only for Yaquis," he said matter-of-factly.

I felt dejected. I was sure he had said something of great importance.

"Eligio is an Indian," don Juan finally said to me, "and as an Indian Eligio has nothing. We Indians have nothing. All you see around here belongs to the Yoris. The Yaquis have only their wrath and what the land offers to them freely."

Nobody uttered a sound for quite some time, then don Juan stood up and said goodbye and walked away. We looked at him until he had disappeared behind a bend of the road. All of us seemed to be nervous. Lucio told us in a disoriented manner that his grandfather had not stayed because he hated rabbit stew. Eligio seemed to be immersed in thoughts. Benigno turned to me and said loudly, "I think the Lord is going to punish you and don Juan for what you're doing."

Lucio began to laugh and Benigno joined him.

"You're clowning, Benigno," Eligio said somberly. "What you've just said isn't worth a damn."

September 15, 1968

It was nine o'clock Saturday night. Don Juan sat in front of Eligio in the center of the *ramada* of Lucio's house. Don Juan placed his sack of peyote buttons between them and sang while rocking his body slightly back and forth. Lucio, Benigno, and I sat five or six feet behind Eligio with our backs against the wall. It was quite dark at first. We had been sitting inside the house under the gasoline lantern waiting for don Juan. He had called us out to the *ramada* when he arrived and had told us where to sit. After a while my eyes became accustomed to the dark. I could see everyone clearly. I noticed that Eligio seemed to be terrified. His entire body shook; his teeth chattered uncontrollably. He was convulsed with spasmodic jerks of his head and back.

Don Juan spoke to him, telling him not to be afraid, and to trust the protector, and to think of nothing else. He casually

took a peyote button, offered it to Eligio, and ordered him to chew it very slowly. Eligio whined like a puppy and recoiled. His breathing was very rapid, it sounded like the whizzing of bellows. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead. He covered his face with his hands. I thought he was crying. It was a very long, tense moment before he regained some control over himself. He sat up straight and, still covering his face with one hand, took the peyote button and began chewing it.

I felt a tremendous apprehension. I had not realized until then that I was perhaps as scared as Eligio. My mouth had a dryness similar to that produced by peyote. Eligio chewed the button for a long time. My tension increased. I began to whine involuntarily as my respiration became more accelerated.

Don Juan began to chant louder, then he offered another button to Eligio and after Eligio had finished it he offered him dry fruit and told him to chew it very slowly.

Eligio got up repeatedly and went to the bushes. At one point he asked for water. Don Juan told him not to drink it but only swish it in his mouth.

Eligio chewed two more buttons and don Juan gave him dry meat.

By the time he had chewed his tenth button I was nearly sick with anxiety.

Suddenly Eligio slumped forward and his forehead hit the ground. He rolled on his left side and jerked convulsively. I looked at my watch. It was twenty after eleven. Eligio tossed, wobbled, and moaned for over an hour while he lay on the floor.

Don Juan maintained the same position in front of him. His peyote songs were almost a murmur. Benigno, who was sitting to my right, looked inattentive; Lucio, next to him, had slumped on his side and was snoring.

Eligio's body crumpled into a contorted position. He lay on his right side with his front toward me and his hands between his legs. His body gave a powerful jump and he turned on his back with his legs slightly curved. His left hand waved out and up with an extremely free and elegant motion. His right hand repeated the same pattern, and then both arms alternated in a wavering, slow movement, resembling that of a harpist. The movement became more vigorous by degrees. His arms had a perceptible vibration and went up and down like pistons. At the same time his hands rotated onward at the wrist and his fingers quivered. It was a beautiful, harmonious, hypnotic sight. I thought his rhythm and muscular control were beyond comparison.

Eligio then rose slowly, as if he were stretching against an enveloping force. His body shivered. He squatted and then pushed himself up to an erect position. His arms, trunk, and head trembled as if an intermittent electric current were going through them. It was as though a force outside his control was setting him or driving him up.

Don Juan's chanting became very loud. Lucio and Benigno woke up and looked at the scene uninterestedly for a while and then went back to sleep.

Eligio seemed to be moving up and up. He was apparently climbing. He cupped his hands and seemed to grab onto objects beyond my vision. He pushed himself up and paused to catch his breath.

I wanted to see his eyes and moved closer to him, but don Juan gave me a fierce look and I recoiled to my place.

Then Eligio jumped. It was a final, formidable leap. He had apparently reached his goal. He puffed and sobbed with the exertion. He seemed to be holding onto a ledge. But something was overtaking him. He shrieked desperately. His grip faltered and he began to fall. His body arched backward and was

convulsed from head to toe with the most beautiful, coordinated ripple. The ripple went through him perhaps a hundred times before his body collapsed like a lifeless burlap sack.

After a while he extended his arms in front of him as though he was protecting his face. His legs stretched out backward as he lay on his chest; they were arched a few inches above the ground, giving his body the very appearance of sliding or flying at an incredible speed. His head was arched as far back as possible, his arms locked over his eyes, shielding them. I could feel the wind hissing around him. I gasped and gave a loud involuntary shriek. Lucio and Benigno woke and looked at Eligio curiously.

"If you promise to buy me a motorcycle I will chew it now," Lucio said loudly.

I looked at don Juan. He made an imperative gesture with his head.

"Son of a bitch!" Lucio mumbled, and went back to sleep.

Eligio stood up and began walking. He took a couple of steps toward me and stopped. I could see him smiling with a beatific expression. He tried to whistle. There was no clear sound yet it had harmony. It was a tune. It had only a couple of bars, which he repeated over and over. After a while the whistling was distinctly audible, and then it became a sharp melody. Eligio mumbled unintelligible words. The words seemed to be the lyrics to the tune. He repeated it for hours. A very simple song, repetitious, monotonous, and yet strangely beautiful.

Eligio seemed to be looking at something while he sang. At one moment he got very close to me. I saw his eyes in the semidarkness. They were glassy, transfixed. He smiled and giggled. He walked and sat down and walked again, groaning and sighing.

Suddenly something seemed to have pushed him from be-

hind. His body arched in the middle as though moved by a direct force. At one instant Eligio was balanced on the tips of his toes, making nearly a complete circle, his hands touching the ground. He dropped to the ground again, softly, on his back, and extended his whole length, acquiring a strange rigidity.

He whimpered and groaned for a while, then began to snore. Don Juan covered him with some burlap sacks. It was 5:35 A.M.

Lucio and Benigno had fallen asleep shoulder to shoulder with their backs against the wall. Don Juan and I sat quietly for a very long time. He seemed to be tired. I broke the silence and asked him about Eligio. He told me that Eligio's encounter with Mecalito had been exceptionally successful; Mescalito had taught him a song the first time they met and that was indeed extraordinary.

I asked him why he had not let Lucio take some for a motorcycle. He said that Mescalito would have killed Lucio if he had approached him under such conditions. Don Juan admitted that he had prepared everything carefully to convince his grandson; he told me that he had counted on my friendship with Lucio as the central part of his strategy. He said that Lucio had always been his great concern, and that at one time they had lived together and were very close, but Lucio became gravely ill when he was seven and don Juan's son, a devout Catholic, made a vow to the Virgin of Guadalupe that Lucio would join a sacred dancing society if his life were spared. Lucio recovered and was forced to carry out the promise. He lasted one week as an apprentice, and then made up his mind to break the vow. He thought he would have to die as a result of it, braced himself, and for a whole day he waited for death to come. Everybody made fun of the boy and the incident was never forgotten.

Don Juan did not speak for a long time. He seemed to have become engulfed by thoughts.

"My setup was for Lucio," he said, "and I found Eligio instead. I knew it was useless, but when we like someone we should properly insist, as though it were possible to remake men. Lucio had courage when he was a little boy and then he lost it along the way."

"Can you bewitch him, don Juan?"

"Bewitch him? For what?"

"So he will change and regain his courage."

"You don't bewitch for courage. Courage is something personal. Bewitching is for rendering people harmless or sick or dumb. You don't bewitch to make warriors. To be a warrior you have to be crystal clear, like Eligio. There you have a man of courage!"

Eligio snored peacefully under the burlap sacks. It was already daylight. The sky was impeccably blue. There were no clouds in sight.

"I would give anything in this world," I said, "to know about Eligio's journey. Would you mind if I asked him to tell me?"

"You should not under any circumstances ask him to do that!"

"Why not? I tell you all about my experiences."

"That's different. It is not your inclination to keep things to yourself. Eligio is an Indian. His journey is all he has. I wish it had been Lucio."

"Isn't there anything you can do, don Juan?"

"No. Unfortunately there is no way to make bones for a jellyfish. It was only my folly.

The sun came out. Its light blurred my tired eyes.

"You've told me time and time again, don Juan, that a sorcerer cannot have follies. I've never thought you could have any."

Don Juan looked at me piercingly. He got up, glanced at Eligio and then at Lucio. He tucked his hat on his head, patting it on its top.

"It's possible to insist, to properly insist, even though we know that what we're doing is useless," he said, smiling. "But we must know first that our acts are useless and yet we must proceed as if we didn't know it. That's a sorcerer's controlled folly."

5

I returned to don Juan's house on October 3, 1968, for the sole purpose of asking him about the events surrounding Eligio's initiation. An almost endless stream of questions had occurred to me while rereading the account of what took place then. I was after very precise explanations so I made a list of questions beforehand, carefully choosing the most appropriate words.

I began by asking him: "Did I *see* that night, don Juan?"

"You almost did."

"Did you *see* that I was *seeing* Eligio's movements?"

"Yes. I *saw* that Mescalito was allowing you to *see* part of Eligio's lesson, otherwise you would've been looking at a man sitting there, or perhaps lying there. During the last mitote you did not notice that the men were doing anything, did you?"

At the last mitote I had not noticed any of the men performing movements out of the ordinary. I told him I could safely say that all I had recorded in my notes was that some of them got up and went to the bushes more often than others.

"But you nearly *saw* Eligio's entire lesson," don Juan went on. "Think about that. Do you understand now how generous Mescalito is with you? Mescalito has never been so gentle with

anyone, to my knowledge. Not anyone. And yet you have no regard for his generosity. How can you turn your back on him so bluntly? Or perhaps I should say, in exchange for what are you turning your back on Mescalito?"

I felt that don Juan was cornering me again. I was unable to answer his question. I had always believed I had quit the apprenticeship in order to save myself, yet I had no idea from what I was saving myself, or for what. I wanted to change the direction of our conversation quickly, and to that end I abandoned my intention to carry on with all my precalculated questions and brought out my most important query.

"I wonder if you could tell me more about your controlled folly," I said.

"What do you want to know about it?"

"Please tell me, don Juan, what exactly is controlled folly?"

Don Juan laughed loudly and made a smacking sound by slapping his thigh with the hollow of his hand.

"This is controlled folly!" he said, and laughed and slapped his thigh again.

"What do you mean . . . ?"

"I am happy that you finally asked me about my controlled folly after so many years, and yet it wouldn't have mattered to me in the least if you had never asked. Yet I have chosen to feel happy, as if I cared, that you asked, as if it would matter that I care. *That* is controlled folly!"

We both laughed very loudly. I hugged him. I found his explanation delightful although I did not quite understand it.

We were sitting, as usual, in the area right in front of the door of his house. It was mid-morning. Don Juan had a pile of seeds in front of him and was picking the debris from them. I had offered to help him but he had turned me down; he said the seeds were a gift for one of his friends in Central Mexico and I did not have enough power to touch them.

"With whom do you exercise controlled folly, don Juan?" I asked after a long silence.

He chuckled.

"With everybody!" he exclaimed, smiling.

"When do you choose to exercise it, then?"

"Every single time I act."

I felt I needed to recapitulate at that point and I asked him if controlled folly meant that his acts were never sincere but were only the acts of an actor.

"My acts are sincere," he said, "but they are only the acts of an actor."

"Then everything you do must be controlled folly!" I said truly surprised.

"Yes, everything," he said.

"But it can't be true," I protested, "that every one of your acts is only controlled folly."

"Why not?" he replied with a mysterious look.

"That would mean that nothing matters to you and you don't really care about anything or anybody. Take me, for example. Do you mean that you don't care whether or not I become a man of knowledge, or whether I live, or die, or do anything?"

"True! I don't. You are like Lucio, or everybody else in my life, my controlled folly."

I experienced a peculiar feeling of emptiness. Obviously there was no reason in the world why don Juan had to care about me, but on the other hand I had almost the certainty that he cared about me personally; I thought it could not be otherwise, since he had always given me his undivided attention during every moment I had spent with him. It occurred to me that perhaps don Juan was just saying that because he was annoyed with me. After all, I had quit his teachings.

"I have the feeling we are not talking about the same thing," I said. "I shouldn't have used myself as an example. What I

meant to say was that there must be something in the world you care about in a way that is not controlled folly. I don't think it is possible to go on living if nothing really matters to us."

"That applies to *you*," he said. "Things matter to *you*. You asked me about my controlled folly and I told you that everything I do in regard to myself and my fellow men is folly, because nothing matters."

"My point is, don Juan, that if nothing matters to you, how can you go on living?"

He laughed and after a moment's pause, in which he seemed to deliberate whether or not to answer me, he got up and went to the back of his house. I followed him.

"Wait, wait, don Juan." I said. "I really want to know; you must explain to me what you mean."

"Perhaps it's not possible to explain," he said. "Certain things in your life matter to you because they're important; your acts are certainly important to you, but for me, not a single thing is important any longer, neither my acts nor the acts of any of my fellow men. I go on living, though, because I have my will. Because I have tempered my will throughout my life until it's neat and wholesome and now it doesn't matter to me that nothing matters. My will controls the folly of my life."

He squatted and ran his fingers on some herbs that he had put to dry in the sun on a big piece of burlap.

I was bewildered. Never would I have anticipated the direction that my query had taken. After a long pause I thought of a good point. I told him that in my opinion some of the acts of my fellow men were of supreme importance. I pointed out that a nuclear war was definitely the most dramatic example of such an act. I said that for me destroying life on the face of the earth was an act of staggering enormity.

"You believe that because you're thinking. You're thinking

about life," don Juan said with a glint in his eyes. "You're not *seeing*."

"Would I feel differently if I could *see?*" I asked.

"Once a man learns to *see* he finds himself alone in the world with nothing but folly," don Juan said cryptically.

He paused for a moment and looked at me as if he wanted to judge the effect of his words.

"Your acts, as well as the acts of your fellow men in general, appear to be important to you because you have *learned* to think they are important."

He used the word "learned" with such a peculiar inflection that it forced me to ask what he meant by it.

He stopped handling his plants and looked at me.

"We learn to think about everything," he said, "and then we train our eyes to look as we think about the things we look at. We look at ourselves already thinking that we are important. And therefore we've got to *feel* important! But then when a man learns to *see*, he realizes that he can no longer think about the things he looks at, and if he cannot think about what he looks at everything becomes unimportant."

Don Juan must have noticed my puzzled look and repeated his statements three times, as if to make me understand them. What he said sounded to me like gibberish at first, but upon thinking about it, his words loomed more like a sophisticated statement about some facet of perception.

I tried to think of a good question that would make him clarify his point, but I could not think of anything. All of a sudden I felt exhausted and could not formulate my thoughts clearly.

Don Juan seemed to notice my fatigue and patted me gently.

"Clean these plants here," he said, "and then shred them carefully into this jar."

He handed me a large coffee jar and left.

He returned to his house hours later, in the late afternoon. I had finished shredding his plants and had had plenty of time to write my notes. I wanted to ask him some questions right off, but he was not in any mood to answer me. He said he was famished and had to fix his food first. He lit a fire in his earthen stove and set up a pot with bone-broth stock. He looked in the bags of groceries I had brought and took some vegetables, sliced them into small pieces, and dumped them into the pot. Then he lay down on his mat, kicked off his sandals, and told me to sit closer to the stove so I could feed the fire.

It was almost dark; from where I sat I could see the sky to the west. The edges of some thick cloud formations were tinted with a deep buff, while the center of the clouds remained almost black.

I was going to make a comment on how beautiful the clouds were, but he spoke first.

"Fluffy edges and a thick core," he said, pointing at the clouds.

His statement was so perfectly apropos that it made me jump.

"I was just going to tell you about the clouds," I said.

"Then I beat you to it," he said, and laughed with childlike abandon.

I asked him if he was in a mood to answer some questions.

"What do you want to know?" he replied.

"What you told me this afternoon about controlled folly has disturbed me very much," I said. "I really cannot understand what you meant."

"Of course you cannot understand it," he said. "You are trying to think about it, and what I said does not fit with your thoughts."

"I'm trying to think about it," I said, "because that's the

only way I personally can understand anything. For example, don Juan, do you mean that once a man learns to *see*, everything in the whole world is worthless?"

"I didn't say worthless. I said unimportant. Everything is equal and therefore unimportant. For example, there is no way for me to say that my acts are more important than yours, or that one thing is more essential than another, therefore all things are equal and by being equal they are unimportant."

I asked him if his statements were a pronouncement that what he had called "seeing" was in effect a "better way" than merely "looking at things." He said that the eyes of man could perform both functions, but neither of them was better than the other; however, to train the eyes only to look was, in his opinion, an unnecessary loss.

"For instance, we need to look with our eyes to laugh," he said, "because only when we look at things can we catch the funny edge of the world. On the other hand, when our eyes *see*, everything is so equal that nothing is funny."

"Do you mean, don Juan, that a man who *sees* cannot ever laugh?"

He remained silent for some time.

"Perhaps there are men of knowledge who never laugh," he said. "I don't know any of them, though. Those I know *see* and also look, so they laugh."

"Would a man of knowledge cry as well?"

"I suppose so. Our eyes look so we may laugh, or cry, or rejoice, or be sad, or be happy. I personally don't like to be sad, so whenever I witness something that would ordinarily make me sad, I simply shift my eyes and *see* it instead of looking at it. But when I encounter something funny I look and I laugh."

"But then, don Juan, your laughter is real and not controlled folly."

Don Juan stared at me for a moment.

"I talk to you because you make me laugh," he said. "You remind me of some bushy-tailed rats of the desert that get caught when they stick their tails in holes trying to scare other rats away in order to steal their food. You get caught in your own questions. Watch out! Sometimes those rats yank their tails off trying to pull themselves free."

I found his comparison funny and I laughed. Don Juan had once shown me some small rodents with bushy tails that looked like fat squirrels; the image of one of those chubby rats yanking its tail off was sad and at the same time morbidly funny.

"My laughter, as well as everything I do, is real," he said, "but it also is controlled folly because it is useless; it changes nothing and yet I still do it."

"But as I understand it, don Juan, your laughter is not useless. It makes you happy."

"No! I am happy because I choose to look at things that make me happy and then my eyes catch their funny edge and I laugh. I have said this to you countless times. One must always choose the path with heart in order to be at one's best, perhaps so one can always laugh."

I interpreted what he had said as meaning that crying was inferior to laughter, or at least perhaps an act that weakened us. He asserted that there was no intrinsic difference and that both were unimportant; he said, however, that his preference was laughter, because laughter made his body feel better than crying.

At that point I suggested that if one has a preference there is no equality; if he preferred laughing to crying, the former was indeed more important.

He stubbornly maintained that his preference did not mean they were not equal; and I insisted that our argument could

be logically stretched to saying that if things were supposed to be so equal why not also choose death?

"Many men of knowledge do that," he said. "One day they may simply disappear. People may think that they have been ambushed and killed because of their doings. They choose to die because it doesn't matter to them. On the other hand, I choose to live, and to laugh, not because it matters, but because that choice is the bent of my nature. The reason I say I choose is because I *see*, but it isn't that I choose to live; my will makes me go on living in spite of anything I may *see*.

"You don't understand me now because of your habit of thinking as you look and thinking as you think."

This statement intrigued me very much. I asked him to explain what he meant by it.

He repeated the same construct various times, as if giving himself time to arrange it in different terms, and then delivered his point, saying that by "thinking" he meant the constant idea that we have of everything in the world. He said that "seeing" dispelled that habit and until I learned to "see" I could not really understand what he meant.

"But if nothing matters, don Juan, why should it matter that I learn to *see?*"

"I told you once that our lot as men is to learn, for good or bad," he said. "I have learned to *see* and I tell you that nothing really matters; now it is your turn; perhaps some day you will *see* and you will know then whether things matter or not. For me nothing matters, but perhaps for you everything will. You should know by now that a man of knowledge lives by acting, not by thinking about acting, nor by thinking about what he will think when he has finished acting. A man of knowledge chooses a path with heart and follows it; and then he looks and rejoices and laughs; and then he *sees* and knows. He knows that his life will be over altogether too

soon; he knows that he, as well as everybody else, is not going anywhere; he knows, because he *sees*, that nothing is more important than anything else. In other words, a man of knowledge has no honor, no dignity, no family, no name, no country, but only life to be lived, and under these circumstances his only tie to his fellow men is his controlled folly. Thus a man of knowledge endeavors, and sweats, and puffs, and if one looks at him he is just like any ordinary man, except that the folly of his life is under control. Nothing being more important than anything else, a man of knowledge chooses any act, and acts it out as if it matters to him. His controlled folly makes him say that what he does matters and makes him act as if it did, and yet he knows that it doesn't; so when he fulfills his acts he retreats in peace, and whether his acts were good or bad, or worked or didn't, is in no way part of his concern.

"A man of knowledge may choose, on the other hand, to remain totally impassive and never act, and behave as if to be impassive really matters to him; he will be rightfully true at that too, because that would also be his controlled folly."

I involved myself at this point in a very complicated effort to explain to don Juan that I was interested in knowing what would motivate a man of knowledge to act in a particular way in spite of the fact that he knew nothing mattered.

He chuckled softly before answering.

"You think about your acts," he said. "Therefore you have to believe your acts are as important as you think they are, when in reality nothing of what one does is important. Nothing! But then if nothing really matters, as you asked me, how can I go on living? It would be more simple to die; that's what you say and believe, because you're thinking about life, just as you're thinking now what *seeing* would be like. You wanted me to describe it to you so you could begin to think

about it, the way you do with everything else. In the case of *seeing*, however, thinking is not the issue at all, so I cannot tell you what it is like to *see*. Now you want me to describe the reasons for my controlled folly and I can only tell you that controlled folly is very much like *seeing;* it is something you cannot think about."

He yawned. He lay on his back and stretched his arms and legs. His bones made a cracking sound.

"You have been away too long," he said. "You think too much."

He got up and walked into the thick chaparral at the side of the house. I fed the fire to keep the pot boiling. I was going to light a kerosene lantern but the semidarkness was very soothing. The fire from the stove, which supplied enough light to write, also created a reddish glow all around me. I put my notes on the ground and lay down. I felt tired. Out of the whole conversation with don Juan the only poignant thing in my mind was that he did not care about me; it disturbed me immensely. Over a period of years I had put my trust in him. Had I not had complete confidence in him I would have been paralyzed with fear at the prospect of learning his knowledge; the premise on which I had based my trust was the idea that he cared about me personally; actually I had always been afraid of him, but I had kept my fear in check because I trusted him. When he removed that basis I had nothing to fall back on and I felt helpless.

A very strange anxiety possessed me. I became extremely agitated and began pacing up and down in front of the stove. Don Juan was taking a long time. I waited for him impatiently.

He returned a while later; he sat down again in front of the fire and I blurted out my fears. I told him that I worried because I was incapable of changing directions in midstream; I explained to him that together with the trust I had in him, I

had also learned to respect and to regard his way of life as being intrinsically more rational, or at least more functional, than mine. I said that his words had plunged me into a terrible conflict because they entailed my having to change my feelings. To illustrate my point I told don Juan the story of an old man of my culture, a very wealthy, conservative lawyer who lived his life convinced that he upheld the truth. In the early thirties, with the advent of the New Deal, he found himself passionately involved in the political drama of that time. He was categorically sure that change was deleterious to the country, and out of devotion to his way of life and the conviction that he was right, he vowed to fight what he thought to be a political evil. But the tide of the time was too strong, it overpowered him. He struggled for ten years against it in the political arena and in the realm of his personal life; then the Second World War sealed his efforts into total defeat. His political and ideological downfall resulted in a profound bitterness; he became a self-exile for twenty-five years. When I met him he was eighty-four years old and had come back to his home town to spend his last years in a home for the aged. It seemed inconceivable to me that he had lived that long, considering the way he had squandered his life in bitterness and self-pity. Somehow he found my company amenable and we used to talk at great length.

The last time I saw him he had concluded our conversation with the following: "I have had time to turn around and examine my life. The issues of my time are today only a story; not even an interesting one. Perhaps I threw away years of my life chasing something that never existed. I've had the feeling lately that I believed in something farcical. It wasn't worth my while. I think I know that. However, I can't retrieve the forty years I've lost."

I told don Juan that my conflict arose from the doubts into

which his words about controlled folly had thrown me.

"If nothing really matters," I said, "upon becoming a man of knowledge one would find oneself, perforce, as empty as my friend and in no better position."

"That's not so," don Juan said cuttingly. "Your friend is lonely because he will die without *seeing*. In his life he just grew old and now he must have more self-pity than ever before. He feels he threw away forty years because he was after victories and found only defeats. He'll never know that to be victorious and to be defeated are equal.

"So now you're afraid of me because I've told you that you're equal to everything else. You're being childish. Our lot as men is to learn and one goes to knowledge as one goes to war; I have told you this countless times. One goes to knowledge or to war with fear, with respect, aware that one is going to war, and with absolute confidence in oneself. Put your trust in yourself, not in me.

"And so you're afraid of the emptiness of your friend's life. But there's no emptiness in the life of a man of knowledge, I tell you. Everything is filled to the brim."

Don Juan stood up and extended his arms as if feeling things in the air.

"Everything is filled to the brim," he repeated, "and everything is equal. I'm not like your friend who just grew old. When I tell you that nothing matters I don't mean it the way he does. For him, his struggle was not worth his while, because he was defeated; for me there is no victory, or defeat, or emptiness. Everything is filled to the brim and everything is equal and my struggle was worth my while.

"In order to become a man of knowledge one must be a warrior, not a whimpering child. One must strive without giving up, without a complaint, without flinching, until one *sees*, only to realize then that nothing matters."

Don Juan stirred the pot with a wooden spoon. The food was ready. He took the pot off the fire and placed it on an adobe rectangular block, which he had built against the wall and which he used as a shelf or a table. With his foot he shoved two small boxes that served as comfortable chairs, especially if one sat with his back against the supporting beams of the wall. He signaled me to sit down and then he poured a bowl of soup. He smiled; his eyes were shining as if he were truly enjoying my presence. He pushed the bowl gently toward me. There was such a warmth and kindness in his gesture that it seemed to be an appeal to restore my trust in him. I felt idiotic; I tried to disrupt my mood by looking for my spoon, but I couldn't find it. The soup was too hot to be drunk directly from the bowl, and while it cooled off I asked don Juan if controlled folly meant that a man of knowledge could not like anybody any more.

He stopped eating and laughed.

"You're too concerned with liking people or with being liked yourself," he said. "A man of knowledge likes, that's all. He likes whatever or whoever he wants, but he uses his controlled folly to be unconcerned about it. The opposite of what you are doing now. To like people or to be liked by people is not all one can do as a man."

He stared at me for a moment with his head tilted a little to one side.

"Think about that," he said.

"There is one more thing I want to ask, don Juan. You said that we need to look with our eyes to laugh, but I believe we laugh because we think. Take a blind man, he also laughs."

"No," he said. "Blind men don't laugh. Their bodies jerk a little with the ripple of laughter. They have never looked at the funny edge of the world and have to imagine it. Their laughter is not roaring."

We did not speak any more. I had a sensation of well-being, of happiness. We ate in silence; then don Juan began to laugh. I was using a dry twig to spoon the vegetables into my mouth.

October 4, 1968

At a certain moment today I asked don Juan if he minded talking a bit more about "seeing." He seemed to deliberate for an instant, then he smiled and said that I was again involved in my usual routine, trying to talk instead of doing.

"If you want to *see* you have to let the smoke guide you," he said emphatically. "I won't talk about this any more."

I was helping him clean some dry herbs. We worked in complete silence for a long time. When I am forced into a prolonged silence I always feel apprehensive, especially around don Juan. At a given moment I brought up a question to him in a sort of compulsive, almost belligerent outburst.

"How does a man of knowledge exercise controlled folly when it comes to the death of a person he loves?" I asked.

Don Juan was taken aback by my question and looked at me quizzically.

"Take your grandson Lucio," I said. "Would your acts be controlled folly at the time of his death?"

"Take my son Eulalio, that's a better example," don Juan replied calmly. "He was crushed by rocks while working in the construction of the Pan-American Highway. My acts toward him at the moment of his death were controlled folly. When I came down to the blasting area he was almost dead, but his body was so strong that it kept on moving and kicking. I stood in front of him and told the boys in the road crew not to move him any more; they obeyed me and stood there surrounding my son, looking at his mangled body. I stood

there too, but I did not look. I shifted my eyes so I would *see* his personal life disintegrating, expanding uncontrollably beyond its limits, like a fog of crystals, because that is the way life and death mix and expand. That is what I did at the time of my son's death. That's all one could ever do, and that is controlled folly. Had I looked at him I would have watched him becoming immobile and I would have felt a cry inside of me, because never again would I look at his fine figure pacing the earth. I *saw* his death instead, and there was no sadness, no feeling. His death was equal to everything else."

Don Juan was quiet for a moment. He seemed to be sad, but then he smiled and tapped my head.

"So you may say that when it comes to the death of a person I love, my controlled folly is to shift my eyes."

I thought about the people I love myself and a terribly oppressive wave of self-pity enveloped me.

"Lucky you, don Juan," I said. "You can shift your eyes. while I can only look."

He found my statement funny and laughed.

"Lucky, bull!" he said. "It's hard work."

We both laughed. After a long silence I began probing him again, perhaps only to dispel my own sadness.

"If I have understood you correctly then, don Juan," I said, "the only acts in the life of a man of knowledge which are not controlled folly are those he performs with his ally or with Mescalito. Isn't that right?"

"That's right," he said, chuckling. "My ally and Mescalito are not on a par with us human beings. My controlled folly applies only to myself and to the acts I perform while in the company of my fellow men."

"However, it is a logical possibility," I said, "to think that a man of knowledge may also regard his acts with his ally or with Mescalito as controlled folly, true?"

He stared at me for a moment.

"You're thinking again," he said. "A man of knowledge doesn't think, therefore he cannot encounter that possibility. Take me, for example. I say that my controlled folly applies to the acts I performed while in the company of my fellow men; I say that because I can *see* my fellow men. However, I cannot *see* through my ally and that makes it incomprehensible to me, so how could I control my folly if I don't *see* through it? With my ally or with Mescalito I am only a man who knows how to *see* and finds that he's baffled by what he *sees;* a man who knows that he'll never understand all that is around him.

"Take your case, for instance. It doesn't matter to me whether you become a man of knowledge or not; however, it matters to Mescalito. Obviously it matters to him or he wouldn't take so many steps to show his concern about you. I can notice his concern and I act toward it, yet his reasons are incomprehensible to me."

6

Just as we were getting into my car to start on a trip to central Mexico, on October 5, 1968, don Juan stopped me.

"I have told you before," he said with a serious expression, "that one should never reveal the name nor the whereabouts of a sorcerer. I believe you understood that you should never reveal my name nor the place where my body is. Now I am going to ask you to do the same with a friend of mine, a friend you will call Genaro. We are going to his house; we will spend some time there."

I assured don Juan that I had never betrayed his confidence.

"I know that," he said without changing his serious expression. "Yet I am concerned with your becoming thoughtless."

I protested and don Juan said his aim was only to remind me that every time one was careless in matters of sorcery, one was playing with an imminent and senseless death that could be averted by being thoughtful and aware.

"We will not touch upon this matter any longer," he said. "Once we leave my house we will not mention Genaro, nor will we think about him. I want you to put your thoughts in order now. When you meet him you must be clear and have no doubts in your mind."

"What kinds of doubts are you referring to, don Juan?"

"Any kinds of doubts whatever. When you meet him you ought to be crystal clear. He will *see* you!"

His strange admonitions made me very apprehensive. I mentioned that perhaps I should not meet his friend at all but only drive to the vicinity of his friend's house and leave him there.

"What I've told you was only a precaution," he said. "You've met one sorcerer already, Vicente, and he nearly killed you. Watch out this time!"

After we arrived in central Mexico it took us two days to walk from where I left my car to his friend's house, a little shack perched on the side of a mountain. Don Juan's friend was at the door, as if he had been waiting for us. I recognized him immediately. I had already made his acquaintance, although very briefly, when I brought my book to don Juan. I had not really looked at him at that time, except in a glancing fashion, so I had had the feeling he was as old as don Juan. As he stood at the door of his house, however, I noticed that he was definitely younger. He was perhaps in his early sixties. He was shorter than don Juan and slimmer, very dark and wiry. His hair was thick and graying and a bit long; it ran over his ears and forehead. His face was round and hard. A very prominent nose made him look like a bird of prey with small dark eyes.

He talked to don Juan first. Don Juan nodded affirmatively. They conversed briefly. They were not speaking Spanish so I did not understand what they were saying. Then don Genaro turned to me.

"You're welcome to my humble little shack," he said apologetically in Spanish.

His words were a polite formula I had heard before in various rural areas of Mexico. Yet as he said the words he laughed

joyously for no overt reason, and I knew he was exercising his controlled folly. He did not care in the least that his house was a shack. I liked don Genaro very much.

For the next two days we went into the mountains to collect plants. Don Juan, don Genaro, and I left each day at the crack of dawn. The two old men went together to some specific but unidentified part of the mountains and left me alone in one area of the woods. I had an exquisite feeling there. I did not notice the passage of time, nor was I apprehensive at staying alone; the extraordinary experience I had both days was an uncanny capacity to concentrate on the delicate task of finding the specific plants don Juan had entrusted me to collect.

We returned to the house in the late afternoon and both days I was so tired that I fell asleep immediately.

The third day, however, was different. The three of us worked together, and don Juan asked don Genaro to teach me how to select certain plants. We returned around noon and the two old men sat for hours in front of the house, in complete silence, as if they were in a state of trance. Yet they were not asleep. I walked around them a couple of times; don Juan followed my movements with his eyes, and so did don Genaro.

"You must talk to the plants before you pick them," don Juan said. He dropped his words casually and repeated his statement three times, as if to catch my attention. Nobody had said a word until he spoke.

"In order to *see* the plants you must talk to them personally," he went on. "You must get to know them individually; then the plants can tell you anything you care to know about them."

It was late in the afternoon. Don Juan was sitting on a flat

rock facing the western mountains; don Genaro was sitting by him on a straw mat with his face toward the north. Don Juan had told me, the first day we were there, that those were their "positions" and that I had to sit on the ground at any place opposite to both of them. He added that while we sat in those positions I had to keep my face toward the southeast and look at them only in brief glances.

"Yes, that's the way it is with plants, isn't it?" don Juan said and turned to don Genaro, who agreed with an affirmative gesture.

I told him that the reason I had not followed his instructions was because I felt a little stupid talking to plants.

"You fail to understand that a sorcerer is not joking," he said severely. "When a sorcerer attempts to *see*, he attempts to gain power."

Don Genaro was staring at me. I was taking notes and that seemed to baffle him. He smiled at me, shook his head, and said something to don Juan. Don Juan shrugged his shoulders. To see me writing must have been quite odd for don Genaro. Don Juan was, I suppose, habituated to my taking notes, and the fact that I wrote while he spoke was no longer odd to him; he could carry on talking without appearing to notice my acts. Don Genaro, however, kept on laughing, and I had to stop writing in order not to disrupt the mood of the conversation.

Don Juan affirmed again that a sorcerer's acts were not to be taken as jokes because a sorcerer played with death at every turn of the way. Then he proceeded to relate to don Genaro the story of how one night I had looked at the lights of death following me during one of our trips. The story proved to be utterly funny; don Genaro rolled on the ground laughing.

Don Juan apologized to me and said that his friend was

given to explosions of laughter. I glanced at don Genaro, who I thought was still rolling on the ground, and saw him performing a most unusual act. He was standing on his head without the aid of his arms or hands, and his legs were crossed as if he were sitting. The sight was so incongruous that it made me jump. When I realized he was doing something almost impossible, from the point of view of body mechanics, he had gone back again to a normal sitting position. Don Juan, however, seemed to be cognizant of what was involved and celebrated don Genaro's performance with roaring laughter.

Don Genaro seemed to have noticed my confusion; he clapped his hands a couple of times and rolled on the ground again; apparently he wanted me to watch him. What had at first appeared to be rolling on the ground was actually leaning over in a sitting position, and touching the ground with his head. He seemingly attained his illogical posture by gaining momentum, leaning over several times, until the inertia carried his body to a vertical stand, so that for an instant he "sat on his head."

When their laughter subsided don Juan continued talking; his tone was very severe. I shifted the position of my body in order to be at ease and give him all my attention. He did not smile at all, as he usually does, especially when I try to pay deliberate attention to what he is saying. Don Genaro kept looking at me as if he were expecting me to start writing again, but I did not take notes any more. Don Juan's words were a reprimand for not talking to the plants I had collected, as he had always told me to do. He said the plants I had killed could also have killed me; he said he was sure they would, sooner or later, make me get ill. He added that if I became ill as a result of hurting plants, I would, however, slough it off and believe I had only a touch of the flu.

The two of them had another moment of mirth, then don Juan became serious again and said that if I did not think of my death, my entire life would be only a personal chaos. He looked very stern.

"What else can a man have, except his life and his death?" he said to me.

At that point I felt it was indispensable to take notes and I began writing again. Don Genaro stared at me and smiled. Then he tilted his head back a little and opened his nostrils. He apparently had remarkable control over the muscles operating his nostrils, because they opened up to perhaps twice their normal size.

What was most comical about his clowning was not so much his gestures as his own reactions to them. After he enlarged his nostrils he tumbled down, laughing, and worked his body again into the same, strange, sitting-on-his-head, upside-down posture.

Don Juan laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks. I felt a bit embarrassed and laughed nervously.

"Genaro doesn't like writing," don Juan said as an explanation.

I put my notes away, but don Genaro assured me that it was all right to write, because he did not really mind it. I gathered my notes again and began writing. He repeated the same hilarious motions and both of them had the same reactions again.

Don Juan looked at me, still laughing, and said that his friend was portraying me; that my tendency was to open my nostrils whenever I wrote; and that don Genaro thought that trying to become a sorcerer by taking notes was as absurd as sitting on one's head and thus he had made up the ludicrous posture of resting the weight of his sitting body on his head.

"Perhaps you don't think it's funny," don Juan said, "but

only Genaro can work his way up to sitting on his head, and only you can think of learning to be a sorcerer by writing your way up."

They both had another explosion of laughter and don Genaro repeated his incredible movement.

I liked him. There was so much grace and directness in his acts.

"My apologies, don Genaro," I said, pointing to the writing pad.

"It's all right," he said and chuckled again.

I could not write any more. They went on talking for a very long time about how plants could actually kill and how sorcerers used plants in that capacity. Both of them kept staring at me while they talked, as if they expected me to write.

"Carlos is like a horse that doesn't like to be saddled," don Juan said. "You have to be very slow with him. You scared him and now he won't write."

Don Genaro expanded his nostrils and said in a mocking plea, frowning and puckering his mouth. "Come on, Carlitos, write! Write until your thumb falls off."

Don Juan stood up, stretching his arms and arching his back. In spite of his advanced age his body seemed to be powerful and limber. He went to the bushes at the side of the house and I was left alone with don Genaro. He looked at me and I moved my eyes away because he made me feel embarrassed.

"Don't tell me you're not even going to look at me?" he said with a most hilarious intonation.

He opened his nostrils and made them quiver; then he stood up and repeated don Juan's movements, arching his back and stretching his arms but with his body contorted into a most ludicrous position; it was truly an indescribable gesture that combined an exquisite sense of pantomine and a sense of the

ridiculous. It enthralled me. It was a masterful caricature of don Juan.

Don Juan came back at that moment and caught the gesture and obviously the meaning also. He sat down chuckling.

"Which direction is the wind?" don Genaro asked casually.

Don Juan pointed to the west with a movement of his head.

"I'd better go where the wind blows," don Genaro said with a serious expression.

He then turned and shook his finger at me.

"And don't you pay any attention if you hear strange noises," he said. "When Genaro shits the mountains tremble."

He leaped into the bushes and a moment later I heard a very strange noise, a deep, unearthly rumble. I did not know what to make of it. I looked at don Juan for a clue but he was doubled over with laughter.

October 17, 1968

I don't remember what prompted don Genaro to tell me about the arrangement of the "other world," as he called it. He said that a master sorcerer was an eagle, or rather that he could make himself into an eagle. On the other hand, an evil sorcerer was a "tecolote," an owl. Don Genaro said that an evil sorcerer was a child of the night and for such a man the most useful animals were the mountain lion or other wild cats, or the night birds, especially the owl. He said that the "brujos liricos," lyric sorcerers, meaning the dilettante sorcerers, preferred other animals—a crow, for example. Don Juan laughed; he had been listening in silence.

Don Genaro turned to him and said, "That's true, you know that, Juan."

Then he said that a master sorcerer could take his disciple

on a journey with him and actually pass through the ten layers of the other world. The master, provided that he was an eagle, could start at the very bottom layer and then go through each successive world until he reached the top. Evil sorcerers and dilettantes could at best, he said, go through only three layers.

Don Genaro gave a description of what those steps were by saying, "You start at the very bottom and then your teacher takes you with him in his flight and soon, boom! You go through the first layer. Then a little while later, boom! You go through the second; and boom! You go through the third . . ."

Don Genaro took me through ten booms to the last layer of the world. When he had finished talking don Juan looked at me and smiled knowingly.

"Talking is not Genaro's predilection," he said, "but if you care to get a lesson, he will teach you about the equilibrium of things."

Don Genaro nodded affirmatively; he puckered up his mouth and closed his eyelids halfway.

I thought his gesture was delightful.

Don Genaro stood up and so did don Juan.

"All right," don Genaro said. "Let's go, then. We could go and wait for Nestor and Pablito. They're through now. On Thursdays they're through early."

Both of them got into my car; don Juan sat in the front. I did not ask them anything but simply started the engine. Don Juan directed me to a place he said was Nestor's home; don Genaro went into the house and a while later came out with Nestor and Pablito, two young men who were his apprentices. They all got in my car and don Juan told me to take the road toward the western mountains.

We left my car on the side of the dirt road and walked

along the bank of a river, which was perhaps fifteen or twenty feet across, to a waterfall that was visible from where I had parked. It was late afternoon. The scenery was quite impressive. Directly above us there was a huge, dark, bluish cloud that looked like a floating roof; it had a well-defined edge and was shaped like an enormous half-circle. To the west, on the high mountains of the Cordillera Central, the rain seemed to be descending on the slopes. It looked like a whitish curtain falling on the green peaks. To the east there was the long, deep valley; there were only scattered clouds over the valley and the sun was shining there. The contrast between the two areas was magnificent. We stopped at the bottom of the waterfall; it was perhaps a hundred and fifty feet high; the roar was very loud.

Don Genaro fastened a belt around his waist. He had at least seven items hanging from it. They looked like small gourds. He took off his hat and let it hang on his back from a cord tied around his neck. He put on a headband that he took from a pouch made of a thick wool fabric. The headband was also made of wool of various colors; a sharp yellow was the most prominent of them. He inserted three feathers in the headband. They seemed to be eagle feathers. I noticed that the places where he had inserted them were not symmetrical. One feather was above the back curve of his right ear, the other was a few inches to the front, and the third was over his left temple. Then he took off his sandals, hooked or tied them to the waist of his trousers, and fastened his belt over his poncho. The belt seemed to be made of woven strips of leather. I could not see whether he tied it or buckled it. Don Genaro walked toward the waterfall.

Don Juan manipulated a round rock into a steady position and sat down on it. The other two young men did the same with some rocks and sat down to his left. Don Juan pointed

to the place next to him, on his right side, and told me to bring a rock and sit by him.

"We must make a line here," he said, showing me that the three were sitting in a row.

By then don Genaro had reached the very bottom of the waterfall and had begun climbing a trail on the right side of it. From where we were sitting the trail looked fairly steep. There were a lot of shrubs he used as railings. At one moment he seemed to lose his footing and almost slid down, as if the dirt were slippery. A moment later the same thing happened and the thought crossed my mind that perhaps don Genaro was too old to be climbing. I saw him slipping and stumbling several times before he reached the spot where the trail ended.

I experienced a sort of apprehension when he began to climb the rocks. I could not figure out what he was going to do.

"What's he doing?" I asked don Juan in a whisper.

Don Juan did not look at me. "Obviously he's climbing," he said.

Don Juan was looking straight at don Genaro. His gaze was fixed. His eyelids were half-closed. He was sitting very erect with his hands resting between his legs, on the edge of the rock.

I leaned over a little bit to see the two young men. Don Juan made an imperative gesture with his hand to make me get back in line. I retreated immediately. I had only a glimpse of the young men. They seemed to be as attentive as he was.

Don Juan made another gesture with his hand and pointed to the direction of the waterfall.

I looked again. Don Genaro had climbed quite a way on the rocky wall. At the moment I looked he was perched on a ledge, inching his way slowly to circumvent a huge boulder. His arms were spread, as if he were embracing the rock. He

moved slowly toward his right and suddenly he lost his footing. I gasped involuntarily. For a moment his whole body hung in the air. I was sure he was going to fall but he did not. His right hand had grabbed onto something and very agilely his feet went back on the ledge again. But before he moved on he turned to us and looked. It was only a glance. There was, however, such a stylization to the movement of turning his head that I began to wonder. I remembered then that he had done the same thing, turning to look at us, every time he slipped. I had thought that don Genaro must have felt embarrassed by his clumsiness and turned to see if we were looking.

He climbed a bit more toward the top, suffered another loss of footing, and hung perilously on the overhanging rock face. This time he was supported by his left hand. When he regained his balance he turned and looked at us again. He slipped twice more before he reached the top. From where we were sitting, the crest of the waterfall seemed to be twenty to twenty-five feet across.

Don Genaro stood motionless for a moment. I wanted to ask don Juan what don Genaro was going to do up there, but don Juan seemed to be so absorbed in watching that I did not dare disturb him.

Suddenly don Genaro jumped onto the water. It was such a thoroughly unexpected action that I felt a vacuum in the pit of my stomach. It was a magnificent, outlandish leap. For a second I had the clear sensation that I had seen a series of superimposed images of his body making an elliptical flight to the middle of the stream.

When my surprise receded I noticed that he had landed on a rock on the edge of the fall, a rock which was hardly visible from where we were sitting.

He stayed perched there for a long time. He seemed to be fighting the power of the onrushing water. Twice he hung over

the precipice and I could not determine what he was clinging to. He gained his balance and squatted on the rock. Then he leaped again, like a tiger. I could barely see the next rock where he landed; it was like a small cone on the very edge of the fall.

He remained there almost ten minutes. He was motionless. His immobility was so impressive to me that I was shivering. I wanted to get up and walk around. Don Juan noticed my nervousness and told me imperatively to be calm.

Don Genaro's stillness plunged me into an extraordinary and mysterious terror. I felt that if he remained perched there any longer I could not control myself.

Suddenly he jumped again, this time all the way to the other bank of the waterfall. He landed on his feet and hands, like a feline. He remained in a squat position for a moment, then he stood up and looked across the fall, to the other side, and then down at us. He stayed dead still looking at us. His hands were clasped at his sides, as if he were holding onto an unseen railing.

There was something truly exquisite about his posture; his body seemed so nimble, so frail. I thought that don Genaro with his headband and feathers, his dark poncho and his bare feet was the most beautiful human being I had ever seen.

He threw his arms up suddenly, lifted his head, and flipped his body swiftly in a sort of lateral somersault to his left. The boulder where he had been standing was round and when he jumped he disappeared behind it.

Huge drops of rain began to fall at that moment. Don Juan got up and so did the two young men. Their movement was so abrupt that it confused me. Don Genaro's masterful feat had thrown me into a state of profound emotional excitement. I felt he was a consummate artist and I wanted to see him right then to applaud him.

I strained to look on the left side of the waterfall to see if

he was coming down, but he was not. I insisted on knowing what had happened to him. Don Juan did not answer.

"We better hurry out of here," he said. "It's a real downpour. We have to take Nestor and Pablito to their house and then we'll have to start on our trip back."

"I didn't even say goodbye to don Genaro," I complained.

"He already said goodbye to you," don Juan answered harshly.

He peered at me for an instant and then softened his frown and smiled.

"He has also wished you well," he said. "He felt happy with you."

"But aren't we going to wait for him?"

"No!" don Juan said sharply. "Let him be, wherever he is. Perhaps he is an eagle flying to the other world, or perhaps he has died up there. It doesn't matter now."

October 23, 1968

Don Juan casually mentioned that he was going to make another trip to central Mexico in the near future.

"Are you going to visit don Genaro?" I asked.

"Perhaps," he said without looking at me.

"He's all right, isn't he, don Juan? I mean nothing bad happened to him up there on top of the waterfall, did it?"

"Nothing happened to him; he is sturdy."

We talked about his projected trip for a while and then I said I had enjoyed don Genaro's company and his jokes. He laughed and said that don Genaro was truly like a child. There was a long pause; I struggled in my mind to find an opening line to ask about his lesson. Don Juan looked at me and said in a mischievous tone: "You're dying to ask me about Genaro's lesson, aren't you?"

I laughed with embarrassment. I had been obsessed with everything that took place at the waterfall. I had been hashing and rehashing all the details I could remember and my conclusions were that I had witnessed an incredible feat of physical prowess. I thought don Genaro was beyond doubt a peerless master of equilibrium; every single movement he had performed was highly ritualized and, needless to say, must have had some inextricable, symbolic meaning.

"Yes," I said. "I admit I'm dying to know what his lesson was."

"Let me tell you something," don Juan said. "It was a waste of time for you. His lesson was for someone who can *see*. Pablito and Nestor got the gist of it, although they don't *see* very well. But you, you went there to look. I told Genaro that you are a very strange plugged-up fool and that perhaps you'd get unplugged with his lesson, but you didn't. It doesn't matter, though. *Seeing* is very difficult.

"I didn't want you to speak to Genaro afterwards, so we had to leave. Too bad. Yet it would have been worse to stay. Genaro risked a great deal to show you something magnificent. Too bad you can't *see*."

"Perhaps, don Juan, if you tell me what the lesson was I may find out that I really *saw*."

Don Juan doubled up with laugher.

"Your best feature is asking questions," he said.

He was apparently going to drop the subject again. We were sitting, as usual, in the area in front of his house; he suddenly got up and walked inside. I trailed behind him and insisted on describing to him what I had seen. I faithfully followed the sequence of events as I remembered it. Don Juan kept on smiling while I spoke. When I had finished he shook his head.

"*Seeing* is very difficult," he said.

I begged him to explain his statement.

"*Seeing* is not a matter of talk," he said imperatively.

Obviously he was not going to tell me anything more, so I gave up and left the house to run some errands for him.

When I returned it was already dark; we had something to eat and afterwards we walked out to the *ramada;* we had no sooner sat down than don Juan began to talk about don Genaro's lesson. He did not give me any time to prepare myself for it. I did have my notes with me, but it was too dark to write and I did not want to alter the flow of his talk by going inside the house for the kerosene lantern.

He said that don Genaro, being a master of balance, could perform very complex and difficult movements. Sitting on his head was one of such movements and with it he had attempted to show me that it was impossible to "see" while I took notes. The action of sitting on his head without the aid of his hands was, at best, a freakish stunt that lasted only an instant. In don Genaro's opinion, writing about "seeing" was the same; that is, it was a precarious maneuver, as odd and as unnecessary as sitting on one's head.

Don Juan peered at me in the dark and in a very dramatic tone said that while don Genaro was horsing around, sitting on his head, I was on the very verge of "seeing." Don Genaro noticed it and repeated his maneuvers over and over, to no avail, because I had lost the thread right away.

Don Juan said that afterwards don Genaro, moved by his personal liking for me, attempted in a very dramatic way to bring me back to that verge of "seeing." After very careful deliberation he decided to show me a feat of equilibrium by crossing the waterfall. He felt that the waterfall was like the edge on which I was standing and was confident I could also make it across.

Don Juan then explained don Genaro's feat. He said that he had already told me that human beings were, for those who

"saw," luminous beings composed of something like fibers of light, which rotated from the front to the back and maintained the appearance of an egg. He said that he had also told me that the most astonishing part of the egg-like creatures was a set of long fibers that came out of the area around the navel; don Juan said that those fibers were of the uttermost importance in the life of a man. Those fibers were the secret of don Genaro's balance and his lesson had nothing to do with acrobatic jumps across the waterfall. His feat of equilibrium was in the way he used those "tentacle-like" fibers.

Don Juan dropped the subject as suddenly as he had started it and began to talk about something thoroughly unrelated.

October 24, 1968

I cornered don Juan and told him I intuitively felt that I was never going to get another lesson in equilibrium and that he had to explain to me all the pertinent details, which I would otherwise never discover by myself. Don Juan said I was right, in so far as knowing that don Genaro would never give me another lesson.

"What else do you want to know?" he asked.

"What are those tentacle-like fibers, don Juan?"

"They are the tentacles that come out of a man's body which are apparent to any sorcerer who *sees*. Sorcerers act toward people in accordance to the way they *see* their tentacles. Weak persons have very short, almost invisible fibers; strong persons have bright, long ones. Genaro's, for instance, are so bright that they resemble thickness. You can tell from the fibers if a person is healthy, or if he is sick, or if he is mean, or kind, or treacherous. You can also tell from the fibers if a person can *see*. Here is a baffling problem. When Genaro *saw* you he knew, just like my friend Vicente did, that you could *see;*

when I *see* you I *see* that you can *see* and yet I know myself that you can't. How baffling! Genaro couldn't get over that. I told him that you were a strange fool. I think he wanted to *see* that for himself and took you to the waterfall."

"Why do you think I give the impression I can *see?*"

Don Juan did not answer me. He remained silent for a long time. I did not want to ask him anything else. Finally he spoke to me and said that he knew why but did not know how to explain it.

"You think everything in the world is simple to understand," he said, "because everything you do is a routine that is simple to understand. At the waterfall, when you looked at Genaro moving across the water, you believed that he was a master of somersaults, because somersaults was all you could think about. And that is all you will ever believe he did. Yet Genaro never jumped across that water. If he had jumped he would have died. Genaro balanced himself on his superb, bright fibers. He made them long, long enough so that he could, let's say, roll on them across the waterfall. He demonstrated the proper way to make those tentacles long, and how to move them with precision.

"Pablito *saw* nearly all of Genaro's movements. Nestor, on the other hand, *saw* only the most obvious maneuvers. He missed the delicate details. But you, you *saw* nothing at all."

"Perhaps if you had told me beforehand, don Juan, what to look for . . ."

He interrupted me and said that giving me instructions would only have hindered don Genaro. Had I known what was going to take place, my fibers would have been agitated and would have interfered with don Genaro's.

"If you could *see*," he said, "it would have been obvious to you, from the first step that Genaro took, that he was not slipping as he went up the side of the waterfall. He was loosen-

ing his tentacles. Twice he made them go around boulders and held to the sheer rock like a fly. When he got to the top and was ready to cross the water he focused them onto a small rock in the middle of the stream, and when they were secured there, he let the fibers pull him. Genaro never jumped, therefore he could land on the slippery surfaces of small boulders at the very edge of the water. His fibers were at all times neatly wrapped around every rock he used.

"He did not stay on the first boulder very long, because he had the rest of his fibers tied onto another one, even smaller, at the place where the onrush of water was the greatest. His tentacles pulled him again and he landed on it. That was the most outstanding thing he did. The surface was too small for a man to hold onto; and the onrush of the water would have washed his body over the precipice had he not had some of his fibers still focused on the first rock.

"He stayed in that second position for a long time, because he had to draw out his tentacles again and send them across to the other side of the fall. When he had them secured he had to release the fibers focused on the first rock. That was very tricky. Perhaps only Genaro could do that. He nearly lost his grip; or maybe he was only fooling us, we'll never know that for sure. Personally, I really think he nearly lost his grip. I know that, because he became rigid and sent out a magnificent shoot, like a beam of light across the water. I feel that beam alone could have pulled him through. When he got to the other side he stood up and let his fibers glow like a cluster of lights. That was the one thing he did just for you. If you had been able to *see*, you would have *seen* that.

"Genaro stood there looking at you, and then he knew that you had not *seen*."

PART TWO

The Task of "Seeing"

7

Don Juan was not at his house when I arrived there at midday on November 8, 1968. I had no idea where to look for him, so I sat and waited. For some unknown reason I knew he would soon be home. A short while later don Juan walked into his house. He nodded at me. We exchanged greetings. He seemed to be tired and lay down on his mat. He yawned a couple of times.

The idea of "seeing" had become an obsession with me and I had made up my mind to use his hallucinogenic smoking mixture again. It had been a terribly difficult decision to make, so I still wanted to argue the point a bit further.

"I want to learn to *see*, don Juan," I said bluntly. "But I really don't want to take anything; I don't want to smoke your mixture. Do you think there is any chance I could learn to *see* without it?"

He sat up, stared at me for a moment, and lay down again.

"No!" he said. "You will have to use the smoke."

"But you said I was on the verge of *seeing* with don Genaro."

"I meant that something in you was glowing as though you were really aware of Genaro's doings, but you were just looking. Obviously there is something in you that resembles *seeing*,

but isn't; you're plugged up and only the smoke can help you."

"Why does one have to smoke? Why can't one simply learn to *see* by oneself? I have a very earnest desire. Isn't that enough?"

"No, it's not enough. *Seeing* is not so simple and only the smoke can give you the speed you need to catch a glimpse of that fleeting world. Otherwise you will only look."

"What do you mean by a fleeting world?"

"The world, when you *see*, is not as you think it is now. It's rather a fleeting world that moves and changes. One may perhaps learn to apprehend that fleeting world by oneself, but it won't do any good, because the body decays with the stress. With the smoke, on the other hand, one never suffers from exhaustion. The smoke gives the necessary speed to grasp the fleeting movement of the world and at the same time it keeps the body and its strength intact."

"All right!" I said dramatically. "I don't want to beat around the bush any longer. I'll smoke."

He laughed at my display of histrionics.

"Cut it out," he said. "You always hook onto the wrong thing. Now you think that just deciding to let the smoke guide you is going to make you *see*. There's much more to it. There is always much more to anything."

He became serious for a moment.

"I have been very careful with you, and my acts have been deliberate," he said, "because it is Mescalito's desire that you understand my knowledge. But I know that I won't have time to teach you all I want. I will only have time to put you on the road and trust that you will seek in the same fashion I did. I must admit that you are more indolent and more stubborn than I. You have other views, though, and the direction that your life will take is something I cannot foresee."

His deliberate tone of voice, something in his attitude, summoned up an old feeling in me, a mixture of fear, loneliness, and expectation.

"We'll soon know where you stand," he said cryptically.

He did not say anything else. After a while he went outside the house. I followed him and stood in front of him, not knowing whether to sit down or to unload some packages I had brought for him.

"Would it be dangerous?" I asked, just to say something.

"Everything is dangerous," he said.

Don Juan did not seem to be inclined to tell me anything else; he gathered some small bundles that were piled in a corner and put them inside a carrying net. I did not offer to help him because I knew that if he had wished my help he would have asked me. Then he lay down on his straw mat. He told me to relax and rest. I lay down on my mat and tried to sleep but I was not tired; the night before I had stopped at a motel and slept until noon, knowing that I had only a three-hour drive to don Juan's place. He was not sleeping either. Although his eyes were closed, I noticed an almost imperceptible, rythmical movement of his head. The thought occurred to me that he was perhaps chanting to himself.

"Let's eat something," don Juan said suddenly, and his voice made me jump. "You're going to need all your energy. You should be in good shape."

He made some soup, but I wasn't hungry.

The next day, November 9, don Juan let me eat only a morsel of food and told me to rest. I lay around all morning but I could not relax. I had no idea what don Juan had in mind, but, worst of all, I was not certain what I had in mind myself.

We were sitting under his *ramada* around 3:00 P.M. I was very hungry. I had suggested various times that we should eat, but he had refused.

"You haven't prepared your mixture for three years," he said suddenly. "You'll have to smoke my mixture, so let's say that I have collected it for you. You will need only a bit of it. I will fill the pipe's bowl once. You will smoke all of it and then rest. Then the keeper of the other world will come. You will do nothing but observe it. Observe how it moves; observe everything it does. Your life may depend on how well you watch."

Don Juan had dropped his instructions so abruptly that I did not know what to say or even what to think. I mumbled incoherently for a moment. I could not organize my thoughts. Finally I asked the first clear thing that came to my mind: "Who's this guardian?"

Don Juan flatly refused to involve himself in conversation, but I was too nervous to stop talking and I insisted desperately that he tell me about this guardian.

"You'll *see* it," he said casually. "It guards the other world."

"What world? The world of the dead?"

"It's not the world of the dead or the world of anything. It's just another world. There's no use telling you about it. *See* it for yourself."

With that don Juan went inside the house. I followed him into his room.

"Wait, wait, don Juan. What are you going to do?"

He did not answer. He took his pipe out of a bundle and sat down on a straw mat in the center of the room, looking at me inquisitively. He seemed to be waiting for my consent.

"You're a fool," he said softly. "You're not afraid. You just say you're afraid."

He shook his head slowly from side to side. Then he took

the little bag with the smoking mixture and filled the pipe bowl.

"I am afraid, don Juan. I am really afraid."

"No, it's not fear."

I desperately tried to gain time and began a long discussion about the nature of my feelings. I sincerely maintained that I was afraid, but he pointed out that I was not panting, nor was my heart beating faster than usual.

I thought for a while about what he had said. He was wrong; I did have many of the physical changes ordinarily associated with fear, and I was desperate. A sense of impending doom permeated everything around me. My stomach was upset and I was sure I was pale; my hands were sweating profusely; and yet I really thought I was not afraid. I did not have the feeling of fear I had been accustomed to throughout my life. The fear which has always been idiosyncratically mine was not there. I was talking as I paced up and down the room in front of don Juan, who was still sitting on his mat, holding his pipe, and looking at me inquisitively; and upon considering the matter I arrived at the conclusion that what I felt instead of my usual fear was a profound sense of displeasure, a discomfort at the mere thought of the confusion created by the intake of hallucinogenic plants.

Don Juan stared at me for an instant, then he looked past me, squinting as if he were struggling to detect something in the distance.

I kept walking back and forth in front of him until he forcefully told me to sit down and relax. We sat quietly for a few minutes.

"You don't want to lose your clarity, do you?" he said abruptly.

"That's very right, don Juan." I said.

He laughed with apparent delight.

"Clarity, the second enemy of a man of knowledge, has loomed upon you.

"You're not afraid," he said reassuringly, "but now you hate to lose your clarity, and since you're a fool, you call that fear."

He chuckled.

"Get me some charcoals," he ordered.

His tone was kind and reassuring. I got up automatically and went to the back of the house and gathered some small pieces of burning charcoal from the fire, put them on top of a small stone slab, and returned to the room.

"Come out here to the porch," don Juan called loudly from outside.

He had placed a straw mat on the spot where I usually sit. I put the charcoals next to him and he blew on them to activate the fire. I was about to sit down but he stopped me and told me to sit on the right edge of the mat. He then put a piece of charcoal in the pipe and handed it to me. I took it. I was amazed at the silent forcefulness with which don Juan had steered me. I could not think of anything to say. I had no more arguments. I was convinced that I was not afraid, but only unwilling to lose my clarity.

"Puff, puff," he ordered me gently. "Just one bowl this time."

I sucked on the pipe and heard the chirping of the mixture catching on fire. I felt an instantaneous coat of ice inside my mouth and my nose. I took another puff and the coating extended to my chest. When I had taken the last puff I felt that the entire inside of my body was coated with a peculiar sensation of cold warmth.

Don Juan took the pipe away from me and tapped the bowl on his palm to loosen the residue. Then, as he always does, he wet his finger with saliva and rubbed it inside the bowl.

My body was numb, but I could move. I changed positions to sit more comfortably.

"What's going to happen?" I asked.

I had some difficulty vocalizing.

Don Juan very carefully put his pipe inside its sheath and rolled it up in a long piece of cloth. Then he sat up straight, facing me. I felt dizzy; my eyes were closing involuntarily. Don Juan shook me vigorously and ordered me to stay awake. He said I knew very well that if I fell asleep I would die. That jolted me. It occurred to me that don Juan was probably just saying that to keep me awake, but on the other hand, it also occurred to me that he might be right. I opened my eyes as wide as I could and that made don Juan laugh. He said that I had to wait for a while and keep my eyes open all the time and that at a given moment I would be able to see the guardian of the other world.

I felt a very annoying heat all over my body; I tried to change positions, but I could not move any more. I wanted to talk to don Juan; the words seemed to be so deep inside of me that I could not bring them out. Then I tumbled on my left side and found myself looking at don Juan from the floor.

He leaned over and ordered me in a whisper not to look at him but to stare fixedly at a point on my mat which was directly in front of my eyes. He said that I had to look with one eye, my left eye, and that sooner or later I would *see* the guardian.

I fixed my stare on the spot he had pointed to but I did not see anything. At a certain moment, however, I noticed a gnat flying in front of my eyes. It landed on the mat. I followed its movements. It came very close to me, so close that my visual perception blurred. And then, all of a sudden, I felt as if I had stood up. It was a very puzzling sensation that deserved some pondering, but there was no time for that. I had the total sensation that I was looking straight onward from my usual eye level, and what I saw shook up the last fiber of my being. There is no other way to describe the emotional jolt I experi-

enced. Right there facing me, a short distance away, was a gigantic, monstrous animal. A truly monstrous thing! Never in the wildest fantasies of fiction had I encountered anything like it. I looked at it in complete, utmost bewilderment.

The first thing I really noticed was its size. I thought, for some reason, that it must be close to a hundred feet tall. It seemed to be standing erect, although I could not figure out how it stood. Next, I noticed that it had wings, two short, wide wings. At that point I became aware that I insisted on examining the animal as if it were an ordinary sight; that is, I looked at it. However, I could not really look at it in the way I was accustomed to looking. I realized that I was, rather, noticing things about it, as if the picture were becoming more clear as parts were added. Its body was covered with tufts of black hair. It had a long muzzle and was drooling. Its eyes were bulgy and round, like two enormous white balls.

Then it began to beat its wings. It was not the flapping motion of a bird's wings, but a kind of flickering, vibratory tremor. It gained speed and began circling in front of me; it was not flying, but rather skidding with astounding speed and agility, just a few inches above the ground. For a moment I found myself engrossed in watching it move. I thought that its movements were ugly and yet its speed and easiness were superb.

It circled twice in front of me, vibrating its wings, and whatever was drooling out of its mouth flew in all directions. Then it turned around and skidded away at an incredible speed until it disappeared in the distance. I stared fixedly in the direction it had gone because there was nothing else I could do. I had a most peculiar sensation of heaviness, a sensation of being incapable of organizing my thoughts coherently. I could not move away. It was as if I were glued to the spot.

Then I saw something like a cloud in the distance; an in-

stant later the gigantic beast was circling again at full speed in front of me. Its wings cut closer and closer to my eyes until they hit me. I felt that its wings had actually hit whatever part of me was there. I yelled with all my might in the midst of one of the most excruciating pains I have ever had.

The next thing I knew I was seated on my mat and don Juan was rubbing my forehead. He rubbed my arms and legs with leaves, then he took me to an irrigation ditch behind his house, took off my clothes, and submerged me completely, then pulled me out and submerged me over and over again.

As I lay on the shallow bottom of the irrigation ditch, don Juan pulled up my left foot from time to time and tapped the sole gently. After a while I felt a ticklishness. He noticed it and said that I was all right. I put on my clothes and we returned to his house. I sat down again on my straw mat and tried to talk, but I felt I could not concentrate on what I wanted to say, although my thoughts were very clear. I was amazed to realize how much concentration was necessary to talk. I also noticed that in order to say something I had to stop looking at things. I had the impression that I was entangled at a very deep level and when I wanted to talk I had to surface like a diver; I had to ascend as if pulled by my words. Twice I went as far as clearing my throat in a fashion which was perfectly ordinary. I could have said then whatever I wanted to, but I did not. I preferred to remain at the strange level of silence where I could just look. I had the feeling that I was beginning to tap what don Juan had called "seeing" and that made me very happy.

Afterwards don Juan gave me some soup and tortillas and ordered me to eat. I was able to eat without any trouble and without losing what I thought to be my "power of seeing." I focused my gaze on everything around me. I was convinced I could "see" everything, and yet the world looked the same

to the best of my assessment. I struggled to "see" until it was quite dark. I finally got tired and lay down and went to sleep.

I woke up when don Juan covered me with a blanket. I had a headache and I was sick to my stomach. After a while I felt better and slept soundly until the next day.

In the morning I was myself again. I asked don Juan eagerly, "What happened to me?"

Don Juan laughed coyly. "You went to look for the keeper and of course you found it," he said.

"But what was it, don Juan?"

"The guardian, the keeper, the sentry of the other world," don Juan said factually.

I intended to relate to him the details of that portentous and ugly beast, but he disregarded my attempt, saying that my experience was nothing special, that any man could do that.

I told him that the guardian had been such a shock to me that I really had not yet been able to think about it.

Don Juan laughed and made fun of what he called an overdramatic bent of my nature.

"That thing, whatever it was, hurt me," I said. "It was as real as you and I."

"Of course it was real. It caused you pain, didn't it?"

As I recollected my experience I grew more excited. Don Juan told me to calm down. Then he asked me if I had really been afraid of it; he stressed the word "really."

"I was petrified," I said. "Never in my life have I experienced such an awesome fright."

"Come on," he said, laughing. "You were not that afraid."

"I swear to you," I said with genuine fervor, "that if I could have moved I would have run hysterically."

He found my statement very funny and roared with laughter.

"What was the point of making me see that monstrosity, don Juan?"

He became serious and gazed at me.

"That was the guardian," he said. "If you want to *see* you must overcome the guardian."

"But how am I to overcome it, don Juan? It is perhaps a hundred feet tall."

Don Juan laughed so hard that tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Why don't you let me tell you what I saw, so there won't be any misunderstanding?" I said.

"If that makes you happy, go ahead, tell me."

I narrated everything I could remember, but that did not seem to change his mood.

"Still, that's nothing new," he said, smiling.

"But how do you expect me to overcome a thing like that? With what?"

He was silent for quiet a while. Then he turned to me and said, "You were not afraid, not really. You were hurt, but you were not afraid."

He reclined against some bundles and put his arms behind his head. I thought he had dropped the subject.

"You know," he said suddenly, looking at the roof of the *ramada*, "every man can *see* the guardian. And the guardian is sometimes for some of us an awesome beast as high as the sky. You're lucky; for you it was only a hundred feet tall. And yet its secret is so simple."

He paused for a moment and hummed a Mexican song.

"The guardian of the other world is a gnat," he said slowly, as if he were measuring the effect of his words.

"I beg your pardon."

"The guardian of the other world is a gnat," he repeated. "What you encountered yesterday was a gnat; and that little gnat will keep you away until you overcome it."

For a moment I did not want to believe what don Juan was saying, but upon recollecting the sequence of my vision I had to admit that at a certain moment I was looking at a gnat, and an instant later a sort of mirage had taken place and I was looking at the beast.

"But how could a gnat hurt me, don Juan?" I asked, truly bewildered.

"It was not a gnat when it hurt you," he said, "it was the guardian of the other world. Perhaps some day you will have the courage to overcome it. Not now, though; now it is a hundred-foot-tall drooling beast. But there is no point in talking about it. It's no feat to stand in front of it, so if you want to know more about it, find the guardian again."

Two days later, on November 11, I smoked don Juan's mixture again.

I had asked don Juan to let me smoke once more to find the guardian. I had not asked him on the spur of the moment, but after long deliberation. My curiosity about the guardian was disproportionately greater than my fear, or the discomfort of losing my clarity.

The procedure was the same. Don Juan filled the pipe bowl once and when I had finished the entire contents he cleaned it and put it away.

The effect was markedly slower; when I began to feel a bit dizzy don Juan came to me and, holding my head in his hands, helped me to lie down on my left side. He told me to stretch my legs and relax and then helped me put my right arm in front of my body, at the level of my chest. He turned my hand so the palm was pressing against the mat, and let my weight rest on it. I did not do anything to help or hinder him, for I did not know what he was doing.

He sat in front of me and told me not to be concerned with

anything. He said that the guardian was going to come, and that I had a ringside seat to *see* it. He also told me, in a casual way, that the guardian could cause great pain, but that there was one way to avert it. He said that two days before he had made me sit up when he judged I had had enough. He pointed to my right arm and said that he had deliberately put it in that position so I could use it as a lever to push myself up whenever I wanted to.

By the time he had finished telling me all that, my body was quite numb. I wanted to call to his attention the fact that it would be impossible for me to push myself up because I had lost control of my muscles. I tried to vocalize the words but I could not. He seemed to have anticipated me, however, and explained that the trick was in the will. He urged me to remember the time, years before, when I had first smoked the mushrooms. On that occasion I had fallen to the ground and sprung up to my feet again by an act of what he called, at that time, my "will"; I had "thought myself up." He said that was in fact the only possible way to get up.

What he was saying was useless to me because I did not remember what I had really done years before. I had an overwhelming sense of despair and closed my eyes.

Don Juan grabbed me by the hair, shook my head vigorously, and ordered me imperatively not to close my eyes. I not only opened my eyes but I did something I thought was astonishing. I actually said, "I don't know how I got up that time."

I was startled. There was something very monotonous about the rhythm of my voice, but it was plainly my voice, and yet I honestly believed I could not have said that, because a minute before I had been incapable of speaking.

I looked at don Juan. He turned his face to one side and laughed.

"I didn't say that," I said.

And again I was startled by my voice. I felt elated. Speaking under these conditions became an exhilarating process. I wanted to ask don Juan to explain my talking, but I found I was again incapable of uttering one single word. I struggled fiercely to voice my thoughts, but it was useless. I gave up and at that moment, almost involuntarily, I said, "Who's talking, who's talking?"

That question made don Juan laugh so hard that at one point he bobbed on his side.

Apparently it was possible for me to say simple things, as long as I knew exactly what I wanted to say.

"Am I talking? Am I talking?" I asked.

Don Juan told me that if I did not stop horsing around he was going to go out and lie down under the *ramada* and leave me alone with my clowning.

"It isn't clowning," I said.

I was very serious about that. My thoughts were very clear; my body, however, was numb; I did not feel it. I was not suffocated, as I had once been in the past under similar conditions; I was comfortable because I could not feel anything; I had no control whatever over my voluntary system and yet I could talk. The thought occurred to me that if I could talk I could probably stand up as don Juan had said.

"Up," I said in English, and in a flicker of an eye I was up.

Don Juan shook his head in disbelief and walked out of the house.

"Don Juan!" I called out three times.

He came back.

"Put me down," I said.

"Put yourself down," he said. "You seem to be doing very well."

I said, "Down," and suddenly I lost sight of the room. I could not see anything. After a moment the room and don

Juan came back again into my field of vision. I thought that I must have lain down with my face to the ground and he had grabbed me by the hair and lifted my head.

"Thank you," I said in a very slow monotone.

"You are welcome," he replied, mocking my tone of voice, and had another attack of laughter.

Then he took some leaves and began rubbing my arms and feet with them.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I am rubbing you," he said, imitating my painful monotone.

His body convulsed with laughter. His eyes were shiny and very friendly. I liked him. I felt that don Juan was compassionate and fair and funny. I could not laugh with him, but I would have liked to. Another feeling of exhilaration invaded me and I laughed; it was such an awful sound that don Juan was taken aback for an instant.

"I better take you to the ditch," he said, "or you're going to kill yourself clowning."

He put me up on my feet and made me walk around the room. Little by little I began to feel my feet, and my legs, and finally my entire body. My ears were bursting with a strange pressure. It was like the sensation of a leg or an arm that has fallen asleep. I felt a tremendous weight on the back of my neck and under the scalp on the top of my head.

Don Juan rushed me to the irrigation ditch at the back of his house; he dumped me there fully clothed. The cold water reduced the pressure and the pain, by degrees, until it was all gone.

I changed my clothes in the house and sat down and I again felt the same kind of aloofness, the same desire to stay quiet. I noticed this time, however, that it was not clarity of mind, or a power to focus; rather, it was a sort of melancholy and a physical fatigue. Finally I fell asleep.

November 12, 1968

This morning don Juan and I went to the nearby hills to collect plants. We walked about six miles on extremely rough terrain. I became very tired. We sat down to rest, at my initiative, and he began a conversation, saying that he was pleased with my progress.

"I know now that it was I who talked," I said, "but at the time I could have sworn it was someone else."

"It was you, of course," he said.

"How come I couldn't recognize myself?"

"That's what the little smoke does. One can talk and not notice it; or one can move thousands of miles and not notice that either. That's also how one can go through things. The little smoke removes the body and one is free, like the wind; better than the wind, the wind can be stopped by a rock or a wall or a mountain. The little smoke makes one as free as the air; perhaps even freer, the air can be locked in a tomb and become stale, but with the aid of the little smoke one cannot be stopped or locked in."

Don Juan's words unleashed a mixture of euphoria and doubt. I felt an overwhelming uneasiness, a sensation of undefined guilt.

"Then one can really do all those things, don Juan?"

"What do you think? You would rather think you're crazy, wouldn't you?" he said cuttingly.

"Well, it's easy for you to accept all those things. For me it's impossible."

"It's not easy for me. I don't have any more privileges than you. Those things are equally hard for you or for me or for anyone else to accept."

"But you are at home with all this, don Juan."

"Yes, but it cost me plenty. I had to struggle, perhaps more

than you ever will. You have a baffling way of getting everything to work for you. You have no idea how hard I had to toil to do what you did yesterday. You have something that helps you every inch of the way. There is no other possible explanation for the manner in which you learn about the powers. You did it before with Mescalito, now you have done it with the little smoke. You should concentrate on the fact that you have a great gift, and leave other considerations on the side."

"You make it sound so easy, but it isn't. I'm torn inside."

"You'll be in one piece again soon enough. You have not taken care of your body, for one thing. You're too fat. I didn't want to say anything to you before. One must always let others do what they have to do. You were away for years. I told you that you would come back, though, and you did. The same thing happened to me. I quit for five and a half years."

"Why did you stay away, don Juan?"

"For the same reason you did. I didn't like it."

"Why did you come back?"

"For the same reason you have come back yourself, because there is no other way to live."

That statement had a great impact on me, for I had found myself thinking that perhaps there was no other way to live. I had never voiced this thought to anyone, yet don Juan had surmised it correctly.

After a very long silence I asked him, "What did I do yesterday, don Juan?"

"You got up when you wanted to."

"But I don't know how I did that."

"It takes time to perfect that technique. The important thing, however, is that you know how to do it."

"But I don't. That's the point, I really don't."

"Of course you do."

"Don Juan, I assure you, I swear to you . . ."

He did not let me finish; he got up and walked away.

Later on we talked again about the guardian of the other world.

"If I believe that whatever I have experienced is actually real," I said, "then the guardian is a gigantic creature that can cause unbelievable physical pain; and if I believe that one can actually travel enormous distances by an act of will, then it's logical to conclude that I could also will the monster to disappear. Is that correct?"

"Not exactly," he said. "You cannot will the guardian to disappear. Your will can stop it from harming you, though. Of course if you ever accomplish that, the road is open to you. You can actually go by the guardian and there's nothing that it can do, not even whirl around madly."

"How can I accomplish that?"

"You already know how. All you need now is practice."

I told him that we were having a misunderstanding that stemmed from our differences in perceiving the world. I said that for me to know something meant that I had to be fully aware of what I was doing and that I could repeat what I knew at will, but in this case I was neither aware of what I had done under the influence of the smoke, nor could I repeat it if my life depended on it.

Don Juan looked at me inquisitively. He seemed to be amused by what I was saying. He took off his hat and scratched his temples as he does when he wants to pretend bewilderment.

"You really know how to talk and say nothing, don't you?" he said, laughing. "I have told you, you have to have an unbending intent in order to become a man of knowledge. But

you seem to have an unbending intent to confuse yourself with riddles. You insist on explaining everything as if the whole world were composed of things that can be explained. Now you are confronted with the guardian and with the problem of moving by using your will. Has it ever occurred to you that only a few things in this world can be explained your way? When I say that the guardian is really blocking your passing and could actually knock the devil out of you, I know what I mean. When I say that one can move by one's will, I also know what I mean. I wanted to teach you, little by little, how to move, but then I realized that you know how to do it even though you say you don't."

"But I really don't know how," I protested.

"You do, you fool," he said sternly, and then smiled. "It reminds me of the time when someone put that kid Julio on a harvesting machine; he knew how to run it although he had never done it before."

"I know what you mean, don Juan; however, I still feel that I could not do it again, because I am not sure of what I did."

"A phony sorcerer tries to explain everything in the world with explanations he is not sure about," he said, "and so everything is witchcraft. But then you're no better. You also want to explain everything your way but you're not sure of your explanations either."

8

Don Juan asked me abruptly if I was planning to leave for home during the weekend. I said I intended to leave Monday morning. We were sitting under his *ramada* around midday on Saturday, January 18, 1969, taking a rest after a long walk in the nearby hills. Don Juan got up and went into the house. A few moments later he called me inside. He was sitting in the middle of his room and had placed my straw mat in front of his. He motioned me to sit down and without saying a word he unwrapped his pipe, took it out of its sheath, filled its bowl with his smoking mixture, and lit it. He had even brought into his room a clay tray filled with small charcoals.

He did not ask me whether I was willing to smoke. He just handed me the pipe and told me to puff. I did not hesitate. Don Juan had apparently assessed my mood correctly; my overwhelming curiosity about the guardian must have been obvious to him. I did not need any coaxing and eagerly smoked the entire bowl.

The reactions I had were identical to those I had had before. Don Juan also proceeded in very much the same manner. This time, however, instead of helping me to do it, he just told me to prop my right arm on the mat and lie down on my

left side. He suggested that I should make a fist if that would give me a better leverage.

I did make a fist with my right hand, because I found it was easier than turning my palm against the floor while lying with my weight on it. I was not sleepy; I felt very warm for a while, then I lost all feeling.

Don Juan lay down on his side facing me; his right forearm rested on his elbow and propped his head up like a pillow. Everything was perfectly placid, even my body, which by then lacked tactile sensations. I felt very content.

"It's nice," I said.

Don Juan got up hurriedly.

"Don't you dare start with this crap," he said forcefully. "Don't talk. You'll waste every bit of energy talking, and then the guardian will mash you down, like you would smash a gnat."

He must have thought that his simile was funny because he began to laugh, but he stopped suddenly.

"Don't talk, please don't talk," he said with a serious look on his face.

"I wasn't about to say anything," I said, and I really did not want to say that.

Don Juan got up. I saw him walking away toward the back of his house. A moment later I noticed that a gnat had landed on my mat and that filled me with a kind of anxiety I had never experienced before. It was a mixture of elation, anguish, and fear. I was totally aware that something transcendental was about to unfold in front of me; a gnat who guarded the other world. It was a ludicrous thought; I felt like laughing out loud, but then I realized that my elation was distracting me and I was going to miss a transition period I wanted to clarify. In my previous attempt to see the guardian I had looked at the gnat first with my left eye, and then I felt that

I had stood up and looked at it with both eyes, but I was not aware how that transition had occurred.

I saw the gnat whirling around on the mat in front of my face and realized that I was looking at it with both eyes. It came very close; at a given moment I could not see it with both eyes any longer and shifted the view to my left eye, which was level with the ground. The instant I changed focus I also felt that I had straightened my body to a fully vertical position and I was looking at an unbelievably enormous animal. It was brilliantly black. Its front was covered with long, black, insidious hair, which looked like spikes coming through the cracks of some slick, shiny scales. The hair was actually arranged in tufts. Its body was massive, thick and round. Its wings were wide and short in comparison to the length of its body. It had two white, bulging eyes and a long muzzle. This time it looked more like an alligator. It seemed to have long ears, or perhaps horns, and it was drooling.

I strained myself to fix my gaze on it and then became fully aware that I could not look at it in the same way I ordinarily look at things. I had a strange thought; looking at the guardian's body I felt that every single part of it was independently alive, as the eyes of men are alive. I realized then for the first time in my life that the eyes were the only part of a man that could show, to me, whether or not he was alive. The guardian, on the other hand, had a "million eyes."

I thought this was a remarkable finding. Before this experience I had speculated on the similes that could describe the "distortions" that rendered a gnat as a gigantic beast; and I had thought that a good simile was "as if looking at an insect through the magnifying lens of a microscope." But that was not so. Apparently viewing the guardian was much more complex than looking at a magnified insect.

The guardian began to whirl in front of me. At one mo-

ment it stopped and I felt it was looking at me. I noticed then that it made no sound. The dance of the guardian was silent. The awesomeness was in its appearance: its bulging eyes; its horrendous mouth; its drooling; its insidious hair; and above all its incredible size. I watched very closely the way it moved its wings, how it made them vibrate without sound. I watched how it skidded over the ground like a monumental ice skater.

Looking at that nightmarish creature in front of me, I actually felt elated. I really believed I had discovered the secret of overpowering it. I thought the guardian was only a moving picture on a silent screen; it could not harm me; it only looked terrifying.

The guardian was standing still, facing me; suddenly it fluttered its wings and turned around. Its back looked like brilliantly colored armor; its shine was dazzling but the hue was nauseating; it was my unfavorable color. The guardian remained with its back turned to me for a while and then, fluttering its wings, again skidded out of sight.

I was confronted with a very strange dilemma. I honestly believed that I had overpowered it by realizing that it presented only a picture of wrath. My belief was perhaps due to don Juan's insistence that I knew more than I was willing to admit. At any rate, I felt I had overcome the guardian and the path was free. Yet I did not know how to proceed. Don Juan had not told me what to do in such a case. I tried to turn and look behind me, but I was unable to move. However, I could see very well over the major part of a 180-degree range in front of my eyes. And what I saw was a cloudy, pale-yellow horizon; it seemed gaseous. A sort of lemon hue uniformly covered all I could see. It seemed that I was on a plateau filled with vapors of sulphur.

Suddenly the guardian appeared again at a point on the horizon. It made a wide circle before stopping in front of me;

its mouth was wide open, like a huge cavern; it had no teeth. It vibrated its wings for an instant and then it charged at me. It actually charged at me like a bull, and with its gigantic wings it swung at my eyes. I screamed with pain and then I flew up, or rather I felt I had ejected myself up, and went soaring beyond the guardian, beyond the yellowish plateau, into another world, the world of men, and I found myself standing in the middle of don Juan's room.

January 19, 1969

"I really thought I had overpowered the guardian," I said to don Juan.

"You must be kidding," he said.

Don Juan had not spoken one word to me since the day before and I did not mind it. I had been immersed in a sort of reverie and again I had felt that if I looked intently I would be able to "see." But I did not see anything that was different. Not talking, however, had relaxed me tremendously.

Don Juan asked me to recount the sequence of my experience, and what particularly interested him was the hue I had seen on the guardian's back. Don Juan sighed and seemed to be really concerned.

"You were lucky that the color was on the guardian's back," he said with a serious face. "Had it been on the front part of its body, or worse yet, on its head, you would be dead by now. You must not try to *see* the guardian ever again. It's not your temperament to cross that plain; yet I was convinced that you could go through it. But let's not talk about it any more. This was only one of a variety of roads."

I detected an unaccustomed heaviness in don Juan's tone.

"What will happen to me if I try to *see* the guardian again?"

"The guardian will take you away," he said. "It will pick you up in its mouth and carry you into that plain and leave you there forever. It is obvious that the guardian knew that it is not your temperament and warned you to stay away."

"How do you think the guardian knew that?"

Don Juan gave me a long, steadfast look. He tried to say something, but gave up as though he was unable to find the right words.

"I always fall for your questions," he said, smiling. "You were not really thinking when you asked me that, were you?"

I protested and reaffirmed that it puzzled me that the guardian knew my temperament.

Don Juan had a strange glint in his eye when he said, "And you had not even mentioned anything about your temperament to the guardian, had you?"

His tone was so comically serious that we both laughed. After a while, however, he said that the guardian, being the keeper, the watchman of that world, knew many secrets that a brujo was entitled to share.

"That's one way a brujo gets to *see*," he said. "But that will not be your domain, so there is no point in talking about it."

"Is smoking the only way to *see* the guardian?" I asked.

"No. You could also *see* it without it. There are scores of people who could do that. I prefer the smoke because it is more effective and less dangerous to oneself. If you try to *see* the guardian without the aid of the smoke, chances are that you may delay in getting out of its way. In your case, for instance, it is obvious that the guardian was warning you when it turned its back so you would look at your enemy color. Then it went away; but when it came back you were still there, so it charged at you. You were prepared, however, and jumped. The little smoke gave you the protection you needed; had you gone into that world without its aid you wouldn't

have been able to extricate yourself from the guardian's grip."

"Why not?"

"Your movements would have been too slow. To survive in that world you need to be as fast as lightning. It was my mistake to leave the room, but I didn't want you to talk any more. You are a blabbermouth, so you talk even against your desire. Had I been there with you I would've pulled your head up. You jumped up by yourself, which was even better; however, I would rather not run a risk like that; the guardian is not something you can fool around with."

9

For three months don Juan systematically avoided talking about the guardian. I paid him four visits during these months; he involved me in running errands for him every time, and when I had performed the errands he simply told me to go home. On April 24, 1969, the fourth time I was at his house, I finally confronted him after we had eaten dinner and were sitting next to his earthen stove. I told him that he was doing something incongruous to me; I was ready to learn and yet he did not even want me around. I had had to struggle very hard to overcome my aversion to using his hallucinogenic mushrooms and I felt, as he had said himself, that I had no time to lose.

Don Juan patiently listened to my complaints.

"You're too weak," he said. "You hurry when you should wait, but you wait when you should hurry. You think too much. Now you think that there is no time to waste. A while back you thought you didn't want to smoke any more. Your life is too damn loose; you're not tight enough to meet the little smoke. I am responsible for you and I don't want you to die like a goddamn fool.

I felt embarrassed.

"What can I do, don Juan? I'm very impatient."

"Live like a warrior! I've told you already, a warrior takes responsibility for his acts; for the most trivial of his acts. You act out your thoughts and that's wrong. You failed with the guardian because of your thoughts."

"How did I fail, don Juan?"

"You think about everything. You thought about the guardian and thus you couldn't overcome it.

"First you must live like a warrior. I think you understand that very well."

I wanted to interject something in my defense, but he gestured with his hand to be quiet.

"Your life is fairly tight," he continued. "In fact, your life is tighter than Pablito's or Nestor's, Genaro's apprentices, and yet they *see* and you don't. Your life is tighter than Eligio's and he'll probably *see* before you do. This baffles me. Even Genaro cannot get over that. You've faithfully carried out everything I have told you to do. Everything that my benefactor taught me, in the first stage of learning, I have passed on to you. The rule is right, the steps cannot be changed. You have done everything one has to do and yet you don't *see;* but to those who *see*, like Genaro, you appear as though you *see*. I rely on that and I am fooled. You always turn around and behave like an idiot who doesn't *see*, which of course is right for you."

Don Juan's words distressed me profoundly. I don't know why but I was close to tears. I began to talk about my childhood and a wave of self-pity enveloped me. Don Juan stared at me for a brief moment and then moved his eyes away. It was a penetrating glance. I felt he had actually grabbed me with his eyes. I had the sensation of two fingers gently clasping me and I acknowledged a weird agitation, an itching, a pleasant despair in the area of my solar plexus. I became aware of my abdominal region. I sensed its heat. I could not speak

coherently any more and I mumbled, then stopped talking altogether.

"Perhaps it's the promise," don Juan said after a long pause.

"I beg your pardon."

"A promise you once made, long ago."

"What promise?"

"Maybe you can tell me that. You do remember it, don't you?"

"I don't."

"You promised something very important once. I thought that perhaps your promise was keeping you from *seeing*."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I'm talking about a promise you made! You must remember it."

"If you know what the promise was, why don't you tell me, don Juan?"

"No. It won't do any good to tell you."

"Was it a promise I made to myself?"

For a moment I thought he might be referring to my resolution to quit the apprenticeship.

"No. This is something that took place a long time ago," he said.

I laughed because I was certain don Juan was playing some sort of game with me. I felt mischievous. I had a sensation of elation at the idea that I could fool don Juan, who, I was convinced, knew as little as I did about the alleged promise. I was sure he was fishing in the dark and trying to improvise. The idea of humoring him delighted me.

"Was it something I promised to my grandpa?"

"No," he said, and his eyes glittered. "Neither was it something you promised to your little grandma."

The ludicrous intonation he gave to the word "grandma" made me laugh. I thought don Juan was setting some sort of

trap for me, but I was willing to play the game to the end. I began enumerating all the possible individuals to whom I could have promised something of great importance. He said no to each. Then he steered the conversation to my childhood.

"Why was your childhood sad?" he asked with a serious expression.

I told him that my childhood had not really been sad, but perhaps a bit difficult.

"Everybody feels that way," he said, looking at me again. "I too was very unhappy and afraid when I was a child. To be an Indian child is hard, very hard. But the memory of that time no longer has meaning for me, beyond that it was hard. I had ceased to think about the hardship of my life even before I had learned to *see*."

"I don't think about my childhood either," I said.

"Why does it make you sad, then? Why do you want to weep?"

"I don't know. Perhaps when I think of myself as a child I feel sorry for myself and for all my fellow men. I feel helpless and sad."

He looked at me fixedly and again my abdominal region registered the weird sensation of two gentle fingers clasping it. I moved my eyes away and then glanced back at him. He was looking into the distance, past me; his eyes were foggy, out of focus.

"It was a promise of your childhood," he said after a moment's silence.

"What did I promise?"

He did not answer. His eyes were closed. I smiled involuntarily; I knew he was feeling his way in the dark; however, I had lost some of my original impetus to humor him.

"I was a skinny child," he went on, "and I was always afraid."

"So was I," I said.

"What I remember the most is the terror and sadness that fell upon me when the Mexican soldiers killed my mother," he said softly, as if the memory was still painful. "She was a poor and humble Indian. Perhaps it was better that her life was over then. I wanted to be killed with her, because I was a child. But the soldiers picked me up and beat me. When I grabbed onto my mother's body they hit my fingers with a horsewhip and broke them. I didn't feel any pain, but I couldn't grasp any more, and then they dragged me away."

He stopped talking. His eyes were still closed and I could detect a very slight tremor in his lips. A profound sadness began to overtake me. Images of my own childhood started to flood my mind.

"How old were you, don Juan?" I asked, just to offset the sadness in me.

"Maybe seven. That was the time of the great Yaqui wars. The Mexican soldiers came upon us unexpectedly while my mother was cooking some food. She was a helpless woman. They killed her for no reason at all. It doesn't make any difference that she died that way, not really, and yet for me it does. I cannot tell myself why, though; it just does. I thought they had killed my father too, but they hadn't. He was wounded. Later on they put us in a train like cattle and closed the door. For days they kept us there in the dark, like animals. They kept us alive with bits of food they threw into the wagon from time to time.

"My father died of his wounds in that wagon. He became delirious with pain and fever and went on telling me that I had to survive. He kept on telling me that until the very last moment of his life.

"The people took care of me; they gave me food; an old woman curer fixed the broken bones of my hand. And as you

can see, I lived. Life has been neither good nor bad to me; life has been hard. Life is hard and for a child it is sometimes horror itself."

We did not speak for a very long time. Perhaps an hour went by in complete silence. I had very confusing feelings. I was somewhat dejected and yet I could not tell why. I experienced a sense of remorse. A while before I had been willing to humor don Juan, but he had suddenly turned the tables with his direct account. It had been simple and concise and had produced a strange feeling in me. The idea of a child undergoing pain had always been a touchy subject for me. In an instant my feelings of empathy for don Juan gave way to a sensation of disgust with myself. I had actually taken notes, as if don Juan's life were merely a clinical case. I was on the verge of ripping up my notes when don Juan poked my calf with his toe to attract my attention. He said he was "seeing" a light of violence around me and wondered whether I was going to start beating him. His laughter was a delightful break. He said that I was given to outbursts of violent behavior but that I was not really mean and that most of the time the violence was against myself.

"You're right, don Juan," I said.

"Of course," he said, laughing.

He urged me to talk about my childhood. I began to tell him about my years of fear and loneliness and got involved in describing to him what I thought to be my overwhelming struggle to survive and maintain my spirit. He laughed at the metaphor of "maintaining my spirit."

I talked for a long time. He listened with a serious expression. Then, at a given moment his eyes "clasped" me again and I stopped talking. After a moment's pause he said that nobody had ever humiliated me and that was the reason I was not really mean.

"You haven't been defeated yet," he said.

He repeated the statement four or five times so I felt obliged to ask him what he meant by that. He explained that to be defeated was a condition of life which was unavoidable. Men were either victorious or defeated and, depending on that, they became persecutors or victims. These two conditions were prevalent as long as one did not "see"; "seeing" dispelled the illusion of victory, or defeat, or suffering. He added that I should learn to "see" while I was victorious to avoid ever having the memory of being humiliated.

I protested that I was not and had never been victorious at anything; and that my life was, if anything, a defeat.

He laughed and threw his hat on the floor.

"If your life is such a defeat, step on my hat," he dared me in jest.

I sincerely argued my point. Don Juan became serious. His eyes squinted to a fine slit. He said that I thought my life was a defeat for reasons other than defeat itself. Then in a very quick and thoroughly unexpected manner he took my head in his hands by placing his palms against my temples. His eyes became fierce as he looked into mine. Out of fright I took an involuntary deep breath through my mouth. He let my head go and reclined against the wall, still gazing at me. He had performed his movements with such a speed that by the time he had relaxed and reclined comfortably against the wall, I was still in the middle of my deep breath. I felt dizzy, ill at ease.

"I *see* a little boy crying," don Juan said after a pause.

He repeated it various times as if I did not understand. I had the feeling he was talking about me as a little boy crying, so I did not really pay attention to it.

"Hey!" he said, demanding my full concentration. "I *see* a little boy crying."

I asked him if that boy was me. He said no. Then I asked him if it was a vision of my life or just a memory of his own life. He did not answer.

"I *see* a little boy," he continued saying. "And he is crying and crying."

"Is he a boy I know?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Is he my little boy?"

"No."

"Is he crying now?"

"He's crying now," he said with conviction.

I thought don Juan was having a vision of someone I knew who was a little boy and who was at that very moment crying. I voiced the names of all the children I knew, but he said those children were irrelevant to my promise and the child who was crying was very important to it.

Don Juan's statements seemed to be incongruous. He had said that I had promised something to someone during my childhood, and that the child who was crying at that very moment was important to my promise. I told him he was not making sense. He calmly repeated that he "saw" a little boy crying at that moment, and that the little boy was hurt.

I seriously struggled to fit his statements into some sort of orderly pattern, but I could not relate them to anything I was aware of.

"I give up," I said, "because I can't remember making an important promise to anybody, least of all to a child."

He squinted his eyes again and said that this particular child who was crying at that precise moment was a child of my childhood.

"He was a child during my childhood and is still crying now?" I asked.

"He is a child crying now," he insisted.

"Do you realize what you're saying, don Juan?"

"I do."

"It doesn't make sense. How can he be a child now if he was one when I was a child myself?"

"He's a child and he's crying now," he said stubbornly.

"Explain it to me, don Juan."

"No. *You* must explain it to me."

For the life of me I could not fathom what he was referring to.

"He's crying! He's crying!" don Juan kept on saying in a mesmerizing tone. "And he's hugging you now. He's hurt! He's hurt! And he's looking at you. Do you feel his eyes? He's kneeling and hugging you. He's younger than you. He has come running to you. But his arm is broken. Do you feel his arm? That little boy has a nose that looks like a button. Yes! That's a button nose."

My ears began to buzz and I lost the sensation of being at don Juan's house. The words "button nose" plunged me at once into a scene out of my childhood. I knew a button-nose boy! Don Juan had edged his way into one of the most recondite places of my life. I knew then the promise he was talking about. I had a sensation of elation, of despair, of awe for don Juan and his splendid maneuver. How in the devil did he know about the button-nose boy of my childhood? I became so agitated by the memory don Juan had evoked in me that my power to remember took me back to a time when I was eight years old. My mother had left two years before and I had spent the most hellish years of my life circulating among my mother's sisters, who served as dutiful mother surrogates and took care of me a couple of months at a time. Each of my aunts had a large family, and no matter how careful and protective the aunts were toward me, I had twenty-two cousins to contend with. Their cruelty was some-

times truly bizarre. I felt then that I was surrounded by enemies, and in the excruciating years that followed I waged a desperate and sordid war. Finally, through means I still do not know to this day, I succeeded in subduing all my cousins. I was indeed victorious. I had no more competitors who counted. However, I did not know that, nor did I know how to stop my war, which logically was extended to the school grounds.

The classrooms of the rural school where I went were mixed and the first and third grades were separated only by a space between the desks. It was there that I met a little boy with a flat nose, who was teased with the nickname "Buttonnose." He was a first-grader. I used to pick on him haphazardly, not really intending to. But he seemed to like me in spite of everything I did to him. He used to follow me around and even kept the secret that I was responsible for some of the pranks that baffled the principal. And yet I still teased him. One day I deliberately toppled over a heavy standing blackboard; it fell on him; the desk in which he was sitting absorbed some of the impact, but still the blow broke his collarbone. He fell down. I helped him up and saw the pain and fright in his eyes as he looked at me and held on to me. The shock of seeing him in pain, with a mangled arm, was more than I could bear. For years I had viciously battled against my cousins and I had won; I had vanquished my foes; I had felt good and powerful up to the moment when the sight of the buttonnose little boy crying demolished my victories. Right there I quit the battle. In whatever way I was capable of, I made a resolution not to win ever again. I thought his arm would have to be cut off, and I promised that if the little boy was cured I would never again be victorious. I gave up my victories for him. That was the way I understood it then.

Don Juan had opened a festered sore in my life. I felt dizzy, overwhelmed. A well of unmitigated sadness beckoned me

and I succumbed to it. I felt the weight of my acts on me. The memory of that little button-nose boy, whose name was Joaquin, produced in me such a vivid anguish that I wept. I told don Juan of my sadness for that boy who never had anything, that little Joaquin who did not have money to go to a doctor and whose arm never set properly. And all I had to give him were my childish victories. I felt so ashamed.

"Be in peace, you funny bird," don Juan said imperatively. "You gave enough. Your victories were strong and they were yours. You gave enough. Now you must change your promise."

"How do I change it? Do I just say so?"

"A promise like that cannot be changed by just saying so. Perhaps very soon you'll be able to know what to do about changing it. Then perhaps you'll even get to *see*."

"Can you give me any suggestions, don Juan?"

"You must wait patiently, knowing that you're waiting, and knowing what you're waiting for. That is the warrior's way. And if it is a matter of fulfilling your promise then you must be aware that you are fulfilling it. Then a time will come when your waiting will be over and you will no longer have to honor your promise. There is nothing you can do for that little boy's life. Only he could cancel that act."

"But how can he?"

"By learning to reduce his wants to nothing. As long as he thinks that he was a victim, his life will be hell. And as long as you think the same your promise will be valid. What makes us unhappy is to want. Yet if we would learn to cut our wants to nothing, the smallest thing we'd get would be a true gift. Be in peace, you made a good gift to Joaquín. To be poor or wanting is only a thought; and so is to hate, or to be hungry, or to be in pain."

"I cannot truly believe that, don Juan. How could hunger and pain be only thoughts?"

"They are only thoughts for me now. That's all I know. I

have accomplished that feat. The power to do that is all we have, mind you, to oppose the forces of our lives; without that power we are dregs, dust in the wind."

"I have no doubt that you have done it, don Juan, but how can a simple man like myself or little Joaquín accomplish that?"

"It is up to us as single individuals to oppose the forces of our lives. I have said this to you countless times: Only a warrior can survive. A warrior knows that he is waiting and what he is waiting for; and while he waits he wants nothing and thus whatever little thing he gets is more than he can take. If he needs to eat he finds a way, because he is not hungry; if something hurts his body he finds a way to stop it, because he is not in pain. To be hungry or to be in pain means that the man has abandoned himself and is no longer a warrior; and the forces of his hunger and pain will destroy him."

I wanted to go on arguing my point, but I stopped because I realized that by arguing I was making a barrier to protect myself from the devastating force of don Juan's superb feat which had touched me so deeply and with such a power. How did he know? I thought that perhaps I had told him the story of the button-nose boy during one of my deep states of nonordinary reality. I did not recollect telling him, but my not remembering under such conditions was understandable.

"How did you know about my promise, don Juan?"

"I *saw* it."

"Did you *see* it when I had taken Mescalito, or when I had smoked your mixture?"

"I *saw* it now. Today."

"Did you *see* the whole thing?"

"There you go again. I've told you, there's no point in talking about what *seeing* is like. It is nothing."

I did not pursue the point any longer. Emotionally I was convinced.

"I also made a vow once," don Juan said suddenly.

The sound of his voice made me jump.

"I promised my father that I would live to destroy his assassins. I carried that promise with me for years. Now the promise is changed. I'm no longer interested in destroying anybody. I don't hate the Mexicans. I don't hate anyone. I have learned that the countless paths one traverses in one's life are all equal. Oppressors and oppressed meet at the end, and the only thing that prevails is that life was altogether too short for both. Today I feel sad not because my mother and father died the way they did; I feel sad because they were Indians. They lived like Indians and died like Indians and never knew that they were, before anything else, men."

10

I went back to visit don Juan on May 30, 1969, and bluntly told him that I wanted to take another crack at "seeing." He shook his head negatively and laughed, and I felt compelled to protest. He told me I had to be patient and the time was not right, but I doggedly insisted I was ready.

He did not seem annoyed with my nagging requests. He tried, nevertheless, to change the subject. I did not let go and asked him to advise me what to do in order to overcome my impatience.

"You must act like a warrior," he said.

"How?"

"One learns to act like a warrior by acting, not by talking."

"You said that a warrior thinks about his death. I do that all the time; obviously that isn't enough."

He seemed to have an outburst of impatience and made a smacking sound with his lips. I told him that I had not meant to make him angry and that if he did not need me there at his house, I was ready to go back to Los Angeles. Don Juan patted me gently on the back and said that he never got angry with me; he had simply assumed I knew what it meant to be a warrior.

"What can I do to live like a warrior?" I asked.

He took off his hat and scratched his temples. He looked at me fixedly and smiled.

"You like everything spelled out, don't you?"

"My mind works that way."

"It doesn't have to."

"I don't know how to change. That is why I ask you to tell me exactly what to do to live like a warrior; if I knew that, I could find a way to adapt myself to it."

He must have thought my statements were humorous; he patted me on the back as he laughed.

I had the feeling he was going to ask me to leave any minute, so I quickly sat down on my straw mat facing him and began asking him more questions. I wanted to know why I had to wait.

He explained that if I were to try to "see" in a helter-skelter manner, before I had "healed the wounds" I received battling the guardian, chances were that I would encounter the guardian again even though I was not looking for it. Don Juan assured me that no man in that position would be capable of surviving such an encounter.

"You must completely forget the guardian before you can again embark on the quest of *seeing*," he said.

"How can anyone forget the guardian?"

"A warrior has to use his will and his patience to forget. In fact, a warrior has only his will and his patience and with them he builds anything he wants."

"But I'm not a warrior."

"You have started learning the ways of sorcerers. You have no more time for retreats or for regrets. You only have time to live like a warrior and work for patience and will, whether you like it or not."

"How does a warrior work for them?"

Don Juan thought for a long time before answering.

"I think there is no way of talking about it," he finally said. "Especially about will. Will is something very special. It happens mysteriously. There is no real way of telling how one uses it, except that the results of using the will are astounding. Perhaps the first thing that one should do is to know that one can develop the will. A warrior knows that and proceeds to wait for it. Your mistake is not to know that you are waiting for your will.

"My benefactor told me that a warrior knows that he is waiting and knows what he is waiting for. In your case, you know that you're waiting. You've been here with me for years, yet you don't know what you are waiting for. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for the average man to know what he is waiting for. A warrior, however, has no problems; he knows that he is waiting for his will."

"What exactly is the will? Is it determination, like the determination of your grandson Lucio to have a motorcycle?"

"No," don Juan said softly and giggled. "That's not will. Lucio only indulges. Will is something else, something very clear and powerful which can direct our acts. Will is something a man uses, for instance, to win a battle which he, by all calculations, should lose."

"Then will must be what we call courage," I said.

"No. Courage is something else. Men of courage are dependable men, noble men perennially surrounded by people who flock around them and admire them; yet very few men of courage have will. Usually they are fearless men who are given to performing daring common-sense acts; most of the time a courageous man is also fearsome and feared. Will, on the other hand, has to do with astonishing feats that defy our common sense."

"Is will the control we may have over ourselves?" I asked.

"You may say that it is a kind of control."

"Do you think I can exercise my will, for instance, by denying myself certain things?"

"Such as asking questions?" he interjected.

He said it in such a mischievous tone that I had to stop writing to look at him. We both laughed.

"No," he said. "Denying yourself is an indulgence and I don't recommend anything of the kind. That is the reason why I let you ask all the questions you want. If I told you to stop asking questions, you might warp your will trying to do that. The indulgence of denying is by far the worst; it forces us to believe we are doing great things, when in effect we are only fixed within ourselves. To stop asking questions is not the will I'm talking about. Will is a power. And since it is a power it has to be controlled and tuned and that takes time. I know that and I'm patient with you. When I was your age I was as impulsive as you. Yet I have changed. Our will operates in spite of our indulgence. For example, your will is already opening your gap, little by little."

"What gap are you talking about?"

"There is a gap in us; like the soft spot on the head of a child which closes with age, this gap opens as one develops one's will."

"Where is that gap?"

"At the place of your luminous fibers," he said, pointing to his abdominal area.

"What is it like? What is it for?"

"It's an opening. It allows a space for the will to shoot out, like an arrow."

"Is the will an object? Or like an object?"

"No. I just said that to make you understand. What a sorcerer calls will is a power within ourselves. It is not a thought, or an object, or a wish. To stop asking questions is not will because it needs thinking and wishing. Will is what can make

you succeed when your thoughts tell you that you're defeated. Will is what makes you invulnerable. Will is what sends a sorcerer through a wall; through space; to the moon, if he wants."

There was nothing else I wanted to ask. I was tired and somewhat tense. I was afraid don Juan was going to ask me to leave and that annoyed me.

"Let's go to the hills," he said abruptly, and stood up.

On the way he started talking about will again and laughed at my dismay over not being able to take notes.

He described will as a force which was the true link between men and the world. He was very careful to establish that the world was whatever we perceive, in any manner we may choose to perceive. Don Juan maintained that "perceiving the world" entails a process of apprehending whatever presents itself to us. This particular "perceiving" is done with our senses and with our will.

I asked him if will was a sixth sense. He said it was rather a relation between ourselves and the perceived world.

I suggested that we halt so I could take notes. He laughed and kept on walking.

He did not make me leave that night, and the next day after eating breakfast he himself brought up the subject of will.

"What you yourself call will is character and strong disposition," he said. "What a sorcerer calls will is a force that comes from within and attaches itself to the world out there. It comes out through the belly, right here, where the luminous fibers are."

He rubbed his navel to point out the area.

"I say that it comes out through here because one can feel it coming out."

"Why do you call it will?"

"I don't call it anything. My benefactor called it will, and other men of knowledge call it will."

"Yesterday you said that one can perceive the world with the senses as well as with the will. How is that possible?"

"An average man can 'grab' the things of the world only with his hands, or his eyes, or his ears, but a sorcerer can grab them also with his nose, or his tongue, or his will, especially with his will. I cannot really describe how it is done, but you yourself, for instance, cannot describe to me how you hear. It happens that I am also capable of hearing, so we can talk about what we hear, but not about how we hear. A sorcerer uses his will to perceive the world. That perceiving, however, is not like hearing. When we look at the world or when we hear it, we have the impression that it is out there and that it is real. When we perceive the world with our will we know that it is not as 'out there' or 'as real' as we think."

"Is will the same as *seeing?*"

"No. Will is a force, a power. *Seeing* is not a force, but rather a way of getting through things. A sorcerer may have a very strong will and yet he may not *see;* which means that only a man of knowledge perceives the world with his senses and with his will and also with his *seeing.*"

I told him that I was more confused than ever about how to use my will to forget the guardian. That statement and my mood of perplexity seemed to delight him.

"I've told you that when you talk you only get confused," he said and laughed. "But at least now you know you are waiting for your will. You still don't know what it is, or how it could happen to you. So watch carefully everything you do. The very thing that could help you develop your will is amidst all the little things you do."

Don Juan was gone all morning; he returned in the early

afternoon with a bundle of dry plants. He signaled me with his head to help him and we worked in complete silence for hours, sorting the plants. When we finished we sat down to rest and he smiled at me benevolently.

I said to him in a very serious manner that I had been reading my notes and I still could not understand what being a warrior entailed or what the idea of will meant.

"Will is not an idea," he said.

This was the first time he had spoken to me the whole day.

After a long pause he continued: "We are different, you and I. Our characters are not alike. Your nature is more violent than mine. When I was your age I was not violent but mean; you are the opposite. My benefactor was like that; he would have been perfectly suited to be your teacher. He was a great sorcerer but he did not *see;* not the way I *see* or the way Genaro *sees.* I understand the world and live guided by my *seeing.* My benefactor, on the other hand, had to live as a warrior. If a man *sees* he doesn't have to live like a warrior, or like anything else, for he can *see* things as they really are and direct his life accordingly. But, considering your character, I would say that you may never learn to *see,* in which case you will have to live your entire life like a warrior.

"My benefactor said that when a man embarks on the paths of sorcery he becomes aware, in a gradual manner, that ordinary life has been forever left behind; that knowledge is indeed a frightening affair; that the means of the ordinary world are no longer a buffer for him; and that he must adopt a new way of life if he is going to survive. The first thing he ought to do, at that point, is to want to become a warrior, a very important step and decision. The frightening nature of knowledge leaves one no alternative but to become a warrior.

"By the time knowledge becomes a frightening affair the man also realizes that death is the irreplaceable partner that

sits next to him on the mat. Every bit of knowledge that becomes power has death as its central force. Death lends the ultimate touch, and whatever is touched by death indeed becomes power.

"A man who follows the paths of sorcery is confronted with imminent annihilation every turn of the way, and unavoidably he becomes keenly aware of his death. Without the awareness of death he would be only an ordinary man involved in ordinary acts. He would lack the necessary potency, the necessary concentration that transforms one's ordinary time on earth into magical power.

"Thus to be a warrior a man has to be, first of all, and rightfully so, keenly aware of his own death. But to be concerned with death would force any one of us to focus on the self and that would be debilitating. So the next thing one needs to be a warrior is detachment. The idea of imminent death, instead of becoming an obsession, becomes an indifference."

Don Juan stopped talking and looked at me. He seemed to be waiting for a comment.

"Do you understand?" he asked.

I understood what he had said but I personally could not see how anyone could arrive at a sense of detachment. I said that from the point of view of my own apprenticeship I had already experienced the moment when knowledge became such a frightening affair. I could also truthfully say that I no longer found support in the ordinary premises of my daily life. And I wanted, or perhaps even more than wanted, I needed, to live like a warrior.

"Now you must detach yourself," he said.

"From what?"

"Detach yourself from everything."

"That's impossible. I don't want to be a hermit."

"To be a hermit is an indulgence and I never meant that.

A hermit is not detached, for he willfully abandons himself to being a hermit.

"Only the idea of death makes a man sufficiently detached so he is incapable of abandoning himself to anything. Only the idea of death makes a man sufficiently detached so he can't deny himself anything. A man of that sort, however, does not crave, for he has acquired a silent lust for life and for all things of life. He knows his death is stalking him and won't give him time to cling to anything, so he tries, without craving, all of everything.

"A detached man, who knows he has no possibility of fencing off his death, has only one thing to back himself with: the power of his decisions. He has to be, so to speak, the master of his choices. He must fully understand that his choice is his responsibility and once he makes it there is no longer time for regrets or recriminations. His decisions are final, simply because his death does not permit him time to cling to anything.

"And thus with an awareness of his death, with his detachment, and with the power of his decisions a warrior sets his life in a strategical manner. The knowledge of his death guides him and makes him detached and silently lusty; the power of his final decisions makes him able to choose without regrets and what he chooses is always strategically the best; and so he performs everything he has to with gusto and lusty efficiency.

"When a man behaves in such a manner one may rightfully say that he is a warrior and has acquired patience!"

Don Juan asked me if I had anything to say, and I remarked that the task he had described would take a lifetime. He said I protested too much in front of him and that he knew I behaved, or at least tried to behave, in terms of a warrior in my day-to-day life.

"You have pretty good claws," he said, laughing. "Show them to me from time to time. It's good practice."

I made a gesture of claws and growled, and he laughed. Then he cleared his throat and went on talking.

"When a warrior has acquired patience he is on his way to will. He knows how to wait. His death sits with him on his mat, they are friends. His death advises him, in mysterious ways, how to choose, how to live strategically. And the warrior waits! I would say that the warrior learns without any hurry because he knows he is waiting for his will; and one day he succeeds in performing something ordinarily quite impossible to accomplish. He may not even notice his extraordinary deed. But as he keeps on performing impossible acts, or as impossible things keep on happening to him, he becomes aware that a sort of power is emerging. A power that comes out of his body as he progresses on the path of knowledge. At first it is like an itching on the belly, or a warm spot that cannot be soothed; then it becomes a pain, a great discomfort. Sometimes the pain and discomfort are so great that the warrior has convulsions for months, the more severe the convulsions the better for him. A fine power is always heralded by great pain.

"When the convulsions cease the warrior notices he has strange feelings about things. He notices that he can actually touch anything he wants with a feeling that comes out of his body from a spot right below or right above his navel. That feeling is the will, and when he is capable of grabbing with it, one can rightfully say that the warrior is a sorcerer, and that he has acquired will."

Don Juan stopped talking and seemed to await my comments or questions. I had nothing to say. I was deeply concerned with the idea that a sorcerer had to experience pain and convulsions but I felt embarrassed about asking him if I

also had to go through that. Finally, after a long silence, I asked him, and he giggled as if he had been anticipating my question. He said that pain was not absolutely necessary; he, for example, had never had it and will had just happened to him.

"One day I was in the mountains," he said, "and I stumbled upon a puma, a female one; she was big and hungry. I ran and she ran after me. I climbed a rock and she stood a few feet away ready to jump. I threw rocks at her. She growled and began to charge me. It was then that my will fully came out, and I stopped her with it before she jumped on me. I caressed her with my will. I actually rubbed her tits with it. She looked at me with sleepy eyes and lay down and I ran like a son of a bitch before she got over it."

Don Juan made a very comical gesture to portray a man running for dear life, holding on to his hat.

I told him that I hated to think I had only female mountain lions or convulsions to look forward to, if I wanted will.

"My benefactor was a sorcerer of great powers," he went on. "He was a warrior through and through. His will was indeed his most magnificent accomplishment. But a man can go still further than that; a man can learn to *see*. Upon learning to *see* he no longer needs to live like a warrior, nor be a sorcerer. Upon learning to *see* a man becomes everything by becoming nothing. He, so to speak, vanishes and yet he's there. I would say that this is the time when a man can be or can get anything he desires. But he desires nothing, and instead of playing with his fellow men like they were toys, he meets them in the midst of their folly. The only difference between them is that a man who *sees* controls his folly, while his fellow men can't. A man who *sees* has no longer an active interest in his fellow men. *Seeing* has already detached him from absolutely everything he knew before."

"The sole idea of being detached from everything I know gives me the chills," I said.

"You must be joking! The thing which should give you the chills is not to have anything to look forward to but a lifetime of doing that which you have always done. Think of the man who plants corn year after year until he's too old and tired to get up, so he lies around like an old dog. His thoughts and feelings, the best of him, ramble aimlessly to the only things he has ever done, to plant corn. For me that is the most frightening waste there is.

"We are men and our lot is to learn and to be hurled into inconceivable new worlds."

"Are there any new worlds for us really?" I asked half in jest.

"We have exhausted nothing, you fool," he said imperatively. "*Seeing* is for impeccable men. Temper your spirit now, become a warrior, learn to *see*, and then you'll know that there is no end to the new worlds for our vision."

11

Don Juan did not make me leave after I had run his errands, as he had been doing lately. He said I could stay, and the next day, June 28, 1969, just before noon he told me I was going to smoke again.

"Am I going to try to *see* the guardian again?"

"No, that's out. This is something else."

Don Juan calmly filled his pipe with smoking mixture, lighted it, and handed it to me. I experienced no apprehension. A pleasant drowsiness enveloped me right away. When I had finished smoking the whole bowl of mixture, don Juan put his pipe away and helped me stand up. We had been sitting facing each other on two straw mats he had placed in the center of his room. He said that we were going for a short walk and encouraged me to walk, shoving me gently. I took a step and my legs sagged. I did not feel any pain when my knees hit the ground. Don Juan held my arm and pushed me up on my feet again.

"You have to walk," he said, "the same way you got up the other time. You must use your will."

I seemed to be stuck to the ground. I attempted a step with my right foot and almost lost my balance. Don Juan held my

right arm at the armpit and gently catapulted me forward, but my legs did not support me and I would have collapsed on my face had don Juan not caught my arm and buffered my fall. He held me by the right armpit and made me lean on him. I could not feel anything but I was certain that my head was resting on his shoulder; I was seeing the room from a slanted perspective. He dragged me in that position around the porch. We circled it twice in a most painful fashion; finally, I suppose, my weight became so great that he had to drop me on the ground. I knew he could not move me. In a certain way it was as if part of myself deliberately wanted to become lead-heavy. Don Juan did not make any effort to pick me up. He looked at me for an instant; I was lying on my back facing him. I tried to smile at him and he began to laugh; then he bent over and slapped me on the belly. I had a most peculiar sensation. It was not painful or pleasurable or anything I could think of. It was rather a jolt. Don Juan immediately began to roll me around. I did not feel anything; I assumed he was rolling me around because my view of the porch changed in accordance with a circular motion. When don Juan had me in the position he wanted he stepped back.

"Stand up!" he ordered me imperatively. "Stand up the way you did it the other day. Don't piddle around. You know how to get up. Now get up!"

I intently tried to recollect the actions I had performed on that occasion, but I could not think clearly; it was as if my thoughts had a will of their own no matter how hard I tried to control them. Finally the thought occurred to me that if I said "up" as I had done before I would certainly get up. I said, "Up," loud and clear but nothing happened.

Don Juan looked at me with obvious displeasure and then walked around me toward the door. I was lying on my left side and had a full view of the area in front of his house; my

back was to the door, so when he walked around me I immediately assumed he had gone inside.

"Don Juan!" I called loudly, but he did not answer.

I had an overpowering feeling of impotence and despair. I wanted to get up. I said, "Up," again and again, as if that were the magic word that would make me move. Nothing happened. I had an attack of frustration and I went through a sort of tantrum. I wanted to beat my head against the floor and weep. I spent excruciating moments in which I wanted to move or talk and I could not do either. I was truly immobile, paralyzed.

"Don Juan, help me!" I finally managed to bellow.

Don Juan came back and sat in front of me, laughing. He said that I was getting hysterical and that whatever I was experiencing was inconsequential. He lifted my head and, looking straight at me, said that I was having an attack of sham fear. He told me not to fret.

"Your life is getting complicated," he said. "Get rid of whatever it is that's causing you to lose your temper. Stay here quietly and rearrange yourself."

He placed my head on the ground. He stepped over me and all I could perceive was the shuffling of his sandals as he walked away.

My first impulse was to fret again, but I could not gather the energy to work myself into it. Instead, I found myself slipping into a rare state of serenity; a great feeling of ease enveloped me. I knew what the complexity of my life was. It was my little boy. I wanted to be his father more than anything else on this earth. I liked the idea of molding his character and taking him hiking and teaching him "how to live," and yet I abhorred the idea of coercing him into my way of life, but that was precisely what I would have to do, coerce him with force or with that artful set of arguments and rewards we call understanding.

"I must let him go," I thought. "I must not cling to him. I must set him free."

My thoughts brought on a terrifying feeling of melancholy. I began to weep. My eyes filled with tears and my view of the porch blurred. Suddenly I had a great urge to get up and look for don Juan to explain to him about my little boy; and the next thing I knew, I was looking at the porch from an upright position. I turned around to face the house and found don Juan standing in front of me. Apparently he had been standing there behind me all the time.

Although I could not feel my steps, I must have walked toward him, because I moved. Don Juan came to me smiling and held me up by the armpits. His face was very close to mine.

"Good, good work," he said reassuringly.

At that instant I became aware that something extraordinary was taking place right there. I had the feeling at first that I was only recollecting an event that had taken place years before. At one time in the past I had seen don Juan's face at very close range; I had smoked his mixture and I had had the feeling then that don Juan's face was submerged in a tank of water. It was enormous and it was luminous and it moved. The image had been so brief that I did not have time to really take stock of it. This time, however, don Juan was holding me and his face was no more than a foot away from mine and I had time to examine it. When I stood up and turned around I definitely saw don Juan; "the don Juan I know" definitely walked toward me and held me. But when I focused my eyes on his face I did not see don Juan as I am accustomed to seeing him; instead, I saw a large object in front of my eyes. I knew it was don Juan's face, yet that knowledge was not guided by my perception; it was, rather, a logical conclusion on my part; after all, my memory confirmed that the instant before, "the don Juan I know" was

holding me by the armpits. Therefore the strange, luminous object in front of me had to be don Juan's face; there was a familiarity to it; yet it had no resemblance to what I would call don Juan's "real" face. What I was looking at was a round object which had a luminosity of its own. Every part in it moved. I perceived a contained, undulatory, rhythmical flow; it was as if the flowing was enclosed within itself, never moving beyond its limits, and yet the object in front of my eyes was oozing with movement at any place on its surface. The thought that occurred to me was that it oozed life. In fact it was so alive that I became engrossed looking at its movement. It was a mesmerizing fluttering. It became more and more engrossing, until I could no longer tell what the phenomenon in front of my eyes was.

I experienced a sudden jolt; the luminous object became blurry, as if something were shaking it, and then it lost its glow and became solid and fleshy. I was then looking at don Juan's familiar dark face. He was smiling placidly. The view of his "real" face lasted an instant and then the face again acquired a glow, a shine, an iridescence. It was not light as I am accustomed to perceiving light, or even a glow; rather it was movement, an incredibly fast flickering of something. The glowing object began to bobble up and down again and that disrupted its undulatory continuity. Its shine diminished as it shook, until it again became the "solid" face of don Juan, as I see him in everyday life. At that moment I vaguely realized that don Juan was shaking me. He was also speaking to me. I did not understand what he was saying, but as he kept on shaking me I finally heard him.

"Don't stare at me. Don't stare at me," he kept saying. "Break your gaze. Break your gaze. Move your eyes away."

Shaking my body seemed to force me to dislodge my steady gaze; apparently when I did not peer intently into don Juan's

face I did not see the luminous object. When I moved my eyes away from his face and looked at it with the corner of my eye, so to speak, I could perceive his solidity; that is to say, I could perceive a three-dimensional person; without really looking at him I could, in fact, perceive his whole body, but when I focused my gaze, the face became at once the luminous object.

"Don't look at me at all," don Juan said gravely.

I moved my eyes away and looked at the ground.

"Don't fix your gaze on anything," don Juan said imperatively, and stepped aside in order to help me walk.

I did not feel my steps and could not figure out how I performed the act of walking, yet with don Juan holding me by the armpit, we moved all the way to the back of his house. We stopped by the irrigation ditch.

"Now gaze at the water," don Juan ordered me.

I looked at the water but I could not gaze at it. Somehow the movement of the current distracted me. Don Juan kept on urging me in a joking manner to exercise my "gazing powers," but I could not concentrate. I gazed at don Juan's face once again but the glow did not become apparent any more.

I began to experience a strange itching on my body, the sensation of a limb that has fallen asleep; the muscles of my legs began to twitch. Don Juan shoved me into the water and I tumbled down all the way to the bottom. He had apparently held my right hand as he pushed me, and when I hit the shallow bottom he pulled me up again.

It took a long time for me to regain control over myself. When we got back to his house hours later, I asked him to explain my experience. As I put on my dry clothes I excitedly described what I had perceived, but he discarded my entire account, saying that there was nothing of importance in it.

"Big deal!" he said, mocking me. "You saw a glow, big deal."

I insisted on an explanation and he got up and said he had to leave. It was almost five in the afternoon.

The next day I insisted again on discussing my peculiar experience.

"Was it *seeing*, don Juan?" I asked.

He remained quiet, smiling mysteriously, as I kept pressing him to answer me.

"Let's say that *seeing* is somewhat like that," he finally said. "You were gazing at my face and saw it shining, but it was still my face. It just happens that the little smoke makes one gaze like that. Nothing to it."

"But in what way would *seeing* be different?"

"When you *see* there are no longer familiar features in the world. Everything is new. Everything has never happened before. The world is incredible!"

"Why do you say incredible, don Juan? What makes it incredible?"

"Nothing is any longer familiar. Everything you gaze at becomes nothing! Yesterday you didn't *see*. You gazed at my face and, since you like me, you noticed my glow. I was not monstrous, like the guardian, but beautiful and interesting. But you did not *see* me. I didn't become nothing in front of you. And yet you did well. You took the first real step toward *seeing*. The only drawback was that you focused on me, and in that case I'm no better than the guardian for you. You succumbed in both instances and didn't *see*."

"Do things disappear? How do they become nothing?"

"Things don't disappear. They don't vanish, if that's what you mean; they simply become nothing and yet they are still there."

"How can that be possible, don Juan?"

"You have the damnedest insistence on talking!" don Juan exclaimed with a serious face. "I think we didn't hit it right about your promise. Perhaps what you really promised was to never, ever stop talking."

Don Juan's tone was severe. The look in his face was concerned. I wanted to laugh but I did not dare. I believed that don Juan was serious, but he was not. He began to laugh. I told him that if I did not talk I got very nervous.

"Let's walk, then," he said.

He took me to the mouth of a canyon at the bottom of the hills. It was about an hour's walk. We rested for a short while and then he guided me through the thick desert underbrush to a water hole; that is, to a spot he said was a water hole. It was as dry as any other spot in the surrounding area.

"Sit in the middle of the water hole," he ordered me.

I obeyed and sat down.

"Are you going to sit here too?" I asked.

I saw him fixing a place to sit some twenty yards from the center of the water hole, against the rocks on the side of the mountain.

He said he was going to watch me from there. I was sitting with my knees against my chest. He corrected my position and told me to sit with my left leg tucked under my seat and my right one bent, with the knee in an upward position. My right arm had to be by my side with my fist resting on the ground, while my left arm was crossed over my chest. He told me to face him and stay there, relaxed but not "abandoned." He then took a sort of whitish cord from his pouch. It looked like a big loop. He looped it around his neck and stretched it with his left hand until it was taut. He plucked the tight string with his right hand. It made a dull, vibratory sound.

He relaxed his grip and looked at me and told me that I had

to yell a specific word if I began to feel that something was coming at me when he plucked the string.

I asked what was supposed to come at me and he told me to shut up. He signaled me with his hand that he was going to commence. He did not; instead, he gave me one more admonition. He said that if something came at me in a very menacing way I had to adopt a fighting form that he had taught me years before, which consisted of dancing, beating the ground with the tip of the left foot, while I slapped my right thigh vigorously. The fighting form was part of a defense technique used in cases of extreme distress and danger.

I had a moment of genuine apprehension. I wanted to inquire about the reason for our being there, but he did not give me time and began plucking the string. He did it various times at regular intervals of perhaps twenty seconds. I noticed that as he kept plucking the string he augmented the tension. I could clearly see that his arms and neck were shivering under the stress. The sound became more clear and I realized then that he added a peculiar yell every time he plucked the string. The combined sound of the tense string and the human voice produced a weird, unearthly reverberation.

I did not feel anything coming at me, but the sight of don Juan's exertion and the eerie sound he was producing had me almost in a state of trance.

Don Juan relaxed his grip and looked at me. While he played, his back was turned to me and he was facing the southeast, as I was; when he relaxed, he faced me.

"Don't look at me when I play," he said. "Don't close your eyes, though. Not for anything. Look at the ground in front of you and listen."

He tensed the string again and began playing. I looked at the ground and concentrated on the sound he was making. I had never heard the sound before in my life.

I became very frightened. The eerie reverberation filled the narrow canyon and began to echo. In fact the sound don Juan was making was coming back to me as an echo from all around the canyon walls. Don Juan must have also noticed that and increased the tension of his string. Although don Juan had changed the pitch, the echo seemed to subside, and then it seemed to concentrate on one point, toward the southeast.

Don Juan reduced the tension of the string by degrees, until I heard a final dull twang. He put the string inside his pouch and walked toward me. He helped me stand up. I noticed then that the muscles of my arms and legs were stiff, like rocks; I was literally soaked in perspiration. I had no idea I had been perspiring so heavily. Drops of sweat ran into my eyes and made them burn.

Don Juan practically dragged me out of the place. I tried to say something but he put his hand over my mouth.

Instead of leaving the canyon the way we had come in, don Juan made a detour. We climbed the side of the mountain and ended up in some hills very far from the mouth of the canyon.

We walked in dead silence to his house. It was already dark by the time we got there. I tried to talk again but don Juan put his hand on my mouth once more.

We did not eat and did not light the kerosene lantern. Don Juan put my mat in his room and pointed at it with his chin. I understood it as a gesture that I should lie down and go to sleep.

"I have the proper thing for you to do," don Juan said to me as soon as I woke up the next morning. "You will start it today. There isn't much time, you know."

After a very long, uneasy pause I felt compelled to ask him, "What did you have me doing in the canyon yesterday?"

Don Juan giggled like a child.

"I just tapped the spirit of that water hole," he said. "That type of spirit should be tapped when the water hole is dry, when the spirit has retreated into the mountain. Yesterday I, let us say, woke him up from his slumber. But he didn't mind it and pointed to your lucky direction. His voice came from that direction. Don Juan pointed toward the southeast.

"What was the string you played, don Juan?"

"A spirit catcher."

"Can I look at it?"

"No. But I'll make you one. Or better yet, you will make one for yourself some day, when you learn to *see*."

"What is it made of, don Juan?"

"Mine is a wild boar. When you get one you will realize that it is alive and can teach you the different sounds it likes. With practice you will get to know your spirit catcher so well that together you will make sounds full of power."

"Why did you take me to look for the spirit of the water hole, don Juan?"

"You will know that very soon."

Around 11:30 A.M. we sat under his *ramada*, where he prepared his pipe for me to smoke.

He told me to stand up when my body was quite numb; I did that with great ease. He helped me walk around. I was surprised at my control; I actually walked twice around the *ramada* by myself. Don Juan stayed by my side but did not guide me or support me. Then he took me by the arm and walked me to the irrigation ditch. He made me sit on the edge of the bank and ordered me imperatively to gaze at the water and think of nothing else.

I tried to focus my gaze on the water but its movement distracted me. My mind and my eyes began to wander onto other features of the immediate surroundings. Don Juan bobbed my

head up and down and ordered me again to gaze only at the water and not think at all. He said it was difficult to stare at the moving water and that one had to keep on trying. I tried three times and every time I became distracted by something else. Don Juan very patiently shook my head every time. Finally I noticed that my mind and my eyes were focusing on the water; in spite of its movement I was becoming immersed in my view of its liquidness. The water became slightly different. It seemed to be heavier and uniformly grayish green. I could notice the ripples it made as it moved. The ripples were extremely sharp. And then, suddenly, I had the sensation that I was not looking at a mass of moving water but at a picture of water; what I had in front of my eyes was a frozen segment of the running water. The ripples were immobile. I could look at every one of them. Then they began to acquire a green phosphorescence and a sort of green fog oozed out of them. The fog expanded in ripples and as it moved, its greenness became more brilliant until it was a dazzling radiance that covered everything.

I don't know how long I stayed by the irrigation ditch. Don Juan did not interrupt me. I was immersed in the green glow of the fog. I could sense it all around me. It soothed me. I had no thoughts, no feelings. All I had was a quiet awareness, the awareness of a brilliant, soothing greenness.

Being extremely cold and damp was the next thing I became aware of. Gradually I realized that I was submerged in the irrigation ditch. At one moment the water slipped inside my nose, and I swallowed it and it made me cough. I had an annoying itch inside my nose and I sneezed repeatedly. I stood up and had such a forceful and loud sneeze that I also farted. Don Juan clapped his hands and laughed.

"If a body farts, it's alive," he said.

He signaled me to follow him and we walked to his house.

I thought of keeping quiet. In a way, I expected to be in a detached and morose mood, but I really did not feel tired or melancholy. I felt rather buoyant and changed my clothes very rapidly. I began to whistle. Don Juan looked at me curiously and pretended to be surprised; he opened his mouth and his eyes. His gesture was very funny and I laughed quite a bit longer than it called for.

"You're cracking up," he said, and laughed very hard himself.

I explained to him that I did not want to fall into the habit of feeling morose after using his smoking mixture. I told him that after he had taken me out of the irrigation ditch, during my attempts to meet the guardian, I had become convinced that I could "see" if I stared at things around me long enough.

"*Seeing* is not a matter of looking and keeping quiet," he said. "*Seeing* is a technique one has to learn. Or maybe it is a technique some of us already know."

He peered at me as if to insinuate that I was one of those who already knew the technique.

"Are you strong enough to walk?" he asked.

I said I felt fine, which I did. I was not hungry, although I had not eaten all day. Don Juan put some bread and some pieces of dry meat in a knapsack, handed it to me, and gestured with his head for me to follow.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

He pointed toward the hills with a slight movement of his head. We headed for the same canyon where the water hole was, but we did not enter it. Don Juan climbed onto the rocks to our right, at the very mouth of the canyon. We went up the hill. The sun was almost on the horizon. It was a mild day but I felt hot and suffocated. I could hardly breathe.

Don Juan was quite a way ahead of me and had to stop to

let me catch up with him. He said I was in terrible physical condition and that it was perhaps not wise to go any further. He let me rest for about an hour. He selected a slick, almost round boulder and told me to lie there. He arranged my body on the rock. He told me to stretch my arms and legs and let them hang loose. My back was slightly arched and my neck relaxed, so that my head also hung loose. He made me stay in that position for perhaps fifteen minutes. Then he told me to uncover my abdominal region. He carefully selected some branches and leaves and heaped them over my naked belly. I felt an instantaneous warmth all over my body. Don Juan then took me by the feet and turned me until my head was toward the southeast.

"Now let us call that spirit of the water hole," he said.

I tried to turn my head to look at him. He held me vigorously by the hair and said that I was in a very vulnerable position and in a terribly weak physical state and had to remain quiet and motionless. He had put all those special branches on my belly to protect me and was going to remain next to me in case I could not take care of myself.

He was standing next to the top of my head, and if I rolled my eyes I could see him. He took his string and tensed it and then realized I was looking at him by rolling my eyes way into my forehead. He gave me a snappy tap on the head with his knuckles and ordered me to look at the sky, not to close my eyes, and to concentrate on the sound. He added, as if on second thought, that I should not hesitate to yell the word he had taught me if I felt something was coming at me.

Don Juan and his "spirit catcher" began with a low-tension twang. He slowly increased the tension, and I began to hear a sort of reverberation first, and then a definite echo which came consistently from a southeasterly direction. The tension increased. Don Juan and his "spirit catcher" were perfectly

matched. The string produced a low-range note and don Juan magnified it, increasing its intensity until it was a penetrating cry, a howling call. The apex was an eerie shriek, inconceivable from the point of view of my own experience.

The sound reverberated in the mountains and echoed back to us. I fancied it was coming directly toward me. I felt it had something to do with the temperature of my body. Before don Juan started his calls I had been very warm and comfortable, but during the highest point of his calls I became chilled; my teeth chattered uncontrollably and I truly had the sensation that something was coming at me. At one point I noticed that the sky had become very dark. I had not been aware of the sky although I was looking at it. I had a moment of intense panic and I yelled the word don Juan had taught me.

Don Juan immediately began to decrease the tension of his eerie calls, but that did not bring me any relief.

"Cover your ears," don Juan mumbled imperatively.

I covered them with my hands. After some minutes don Juan stopped altogether and came around to my side. After he had taken the branches and leaves off my belly, he helped me up and carefully put them on the rock where I had been lying. He made a fire with them, and while it burned he rubbed my stomach with other leaves from his pouch.

He put his hand on my mouth when I was about to tell him that I had a terrible headache.

We stayed there until all the leaves had burned. It was fairly dark by then. We walked down the hill and I got sick to my stomach.

While we were walking along the irrigation ditch, don Juan said that I had done enough and I should not stay around. I asked him to explain what the spirit of the water hole was,

but he gestured me to be quiet. He said that we would talk about it some other time, then he deliberately changed the subject and gave me a long explanation about "seeing." I said it was regrettable that I could not write in the darkness. He seemed very pleased and said that most of the time I did not pay attention to what he had to say because I was so determined to write everything down.

He spoke about "seeing" as a process independent of the allies and the techniques of sorcery. A sorcerer was a person who could command an ally and could thus manipulate an ally's power to his advantage, but the fact that he commanded an ally did not mean that he could "see." I reminded him that he had told me before that it was impossible to "see" unless one had an ally. Don Juan very calmly replied that he had come to the conclusion it was possible to "see" and yet not command an ally. He felt there was no reason why not, since "seeing" had nothing to do with the manipulatory techniques of sorcery, which served only to act upon our fellow men. The techniques of "seeing," on the other hand, had no effect on men.

My thoughts were very clear. I experienced no fatigue or drowsiness and no longer had an uncomfortable feeling in my stomach, as I walked with don Juan. I was terribly hungry, and when we got to his house I gorged myself with food.

Afterwards I asked him to tell me more about the techniques of "seeing." He smiled broadly at me and said that I was again myself.

"How is it," I said, "that the techniques of *seeing* have no effect on our fellow men?"

"I've told you already," he said. "*Seeing* is not sorcery. Yet one may easily confuse them, because a man who *sees* can learn, in no time at all, to manipulate an ally and may become a sorcerer. On the other hand, a man may learn certain tech-

niques in order to command an ally and thus become a sorcerer, and yet he may never learn to *see*.

"Besides, *seeing* is contrary to sorcery. *Seeing* makes one realize the unimportance of it all."

"The unimportance of what, don Juan?"

"The unimportance of everything."

We did not say anything else. I felt very relaxed and did not want to speak any more. I was lying on my back on a straw mat. I had made a pillow with my windbreaker. I felt comfortable and happy and wrote my notes for hours in the light of the kerosene lantern.

Suddenly don Juan spoke again.

"Today you did very well," he said. "You did very well at the water. The spirit of the water hole likes you and helped you all the way."

I realized then that I had forgotten to recount my experience to him. I began to describe the way I had perceived the water. He did not let me continue. He said that he knew I had perceived a green fog.

I felt compelled to ask, "How did you know that, don Juan?"

"I *saw* you."

"What did I do?"

"Nothing, you sat there and gazed into the water and finally you perceived the green mist."

"Was it *seeing?*"

"No. But it was very close. You're getting close."

I got very excited. I wanted to know more about it. He laughed and made fun of my eagerness. He said that anyone could perceive the green fog because it was like the guardian, something that was unavoidably there, so there was no great accomplishment in perceiving it.

"When I said you did well, I meant that you did not fret,"

he said, "as you did with the guardian. If you had become restless I would have had to shake your head and bring you back. Whenever a man goes into the green fog his benefactor has to stay by him in case it begins to trap him. You can jump out of the guardian's reach by yourself, but you can't escape the clutches of the green fog by yourself. At least not at the beginning. Later on you may learn a way to do it. Now we're trying to find out something else."

"What are we trying to find out?"

"Whether you can *see* the water."

"How will I know that I have *seen* it, or that I am *seeing* it?"

"You will know. You get confused only when you talk."

12

Working on my notes I had come across various questions.

"Is the green fog, like the guardian, something that one has to overcome in order to *see?*" I asked don Juan as soon as we sat down under his *ramada* on August 8, 1969.

"Yes. One must overcome everything," he said.

"How can I overcome the green fog?"

"The same way you should have overcome the guardian, by letting it turn into nothing."

"What should I do?"

"Nothing. For you, the green fog is something much easier than the guardian. The spirit of the water hole likes you, while it certainly was not your temperament to deal with the guardian. You never really *saw* the guardian."

"Maybe that was because I didn't like it. What if I were to meet a guardian I liked? There must be some people who would regard the guardian I saw as being beautiful. Would they overcome it because they liked it?"

"No! You still don't understand. It doesn't matter whether you like or dislike the guardian. As long as you have a feeling toward it, the guardian will remain the same, monstrous, beautiful, or whatever. If you have no feeling toward it, on the other hand, the guardian will become nothing and will still be there in front of you."

The idea that something as colossal as the guardian could become nothing and still be in front of my eyes made absolutely no sense. I felt it was one of the alogical premises of don Juan's knowledge. However, I also felt that if he wanted to he could explain it to me. I insisted on asking him what he meant by that.

"You thought the guardian was something you knew, that's what I mean."

"But I didn't think it was something I knew."

"You thought it was ugly. Its size was awesome. It was a monster. You know what all those things are. So the guardian was always something you knew, and as long as it was something you knew you did not *see* it. I have told you already, the guardian had to become nothing and yet it had to stand in front of you. It had to be there and it had, at the same time, to be nothing."

"How could that be, don Juan? What you say is absurd."

"It is. But that is *seeing*. There is really no way to talk about it. *Seeing*, as I said before, is learned by *seeing*.

"Apparently you have no problem with water. You nearly *saw* it the other day. Water is your 'hinge.' All you need now is to perfect your technique of *seeing*. You have a powerful helper in the spirit of the water hole."

"That's another burning question I have, don Juan."

"You may have all the burning questions you want, but we cannot talk about the spirit of the water hole in this vicinity. In fact, it is better not to think about it at all. Not at all. Otherwise the spirit will trap you and if that happens there is nothing a living man can do to help you. So keep your mouth shut and keep your thoughts on something else."

Around ten o'clock the next morning don Juan took his pipe out of its sheath, filled it with smoking mixture, then

handed it to me and told me to carry it to the bank of the stream. Holding the pipe with both hands, I managed to unbutton my shirt and put the pipe inside and hold it tight. Don Juan carried two straw mats and a small tray with coals. It was a warm day. We sat on the mats in the shade of a small grove of *brea* trees at the very edge of the water. Don Juan placed a charcoal inside the pipe bowl and told me to smoke. I did not have any apprehension or any feeling of elation. I remembered that during my second attempt to "see" the guardian, after don Juan had explained its nature, I had had a unique sensation of wonder and awe. This time, however, although don Juan had made me cognizant of the possibility of actually "seeing" the water, I was not involved emotionally; I was only curious.

Don Juan made me smoke twice the amount I had smoked during previous attempts. At a given moment he leaned over and whispered in my right ear that he was going to teach me how to use the water in order to move. I felt his face very close, as if he had put his mouth next to my ear. He told me not to gaze into the water, but to focus my eyes on the surface and keep them fixed until the water turned into a green fog. He repeated over and over that I had to put all my attention on the fog until I could not detect anything else.

"Look at the water in front of you," I heard him saying, "but don't let its sound carry you anywhere. If you let the sound of the water carry you I may never be able to find you and bring you back. Now get into the green fog and listen to my voice."

I heard and understood him with extraordinary clarity. I began looking at the water fixedly, and had a very peculiar sensation of physical pleasure; an itch; an undefined happiness. I stared for a long time but did not detect the green fog. I felt that my eyes were getting out of focus and I had to struggle to keep looking at the water; finally I could not control my

eyes any longer and I must have closed them, or blinked, or perhaps I just lost my capacity to focus; at any rate, at that very moment the water became fixed; it ceased to move. It seemed to be a painting. The ripples were immobile. Then the water began to fizzle; it was as if it had carbonated particles that exploded at once. For an instant I saw the fizzling as a slow expansion of green matter. It was a silent explosion; the water burst into a brilliant green mist, which expanded until it had enveloped me.

I remained suspended in it until a very sharp, sustained, shrill noise shook everything; the fog seemed to congeal into the usual features of the water surface. The shrill noise was don Juan yelling, "Heyyyy!" close to my ear. He told me to pay attention to his voice and go back into the fog and wait there until he called me. I said, "O.K.," in English and heard the cackling noise of his laughter.

"Please, don't talk," he said. "Don't give me any more O.K.s."

I could hear him very well. The sound of his voice was melodious and above all friendly. I knew that without thinking; it was a conviction that struck me and then passed.

Don Juan's voice ordered me to focus all my attention on the fog but not abandon myself to it. He said repeatedly that a warrior did not abandon himself to anything, not even to his death. I became immersed in the mist again and noticed that it was not fog at all, or at least it was not what I conceive fog to be like. The foglike phenomenon was composed of tiny bubbles, round objects that came into my field of "vision" and moved out of it with a floating quality. I watched their movement for a while, then a loud, distant noise jolted my attention and I lost my capacity to focus and could no longer perceive the tiny bubbles. All I was aware of then was a green, amorphous, foglike glow. I heard the loud noise again and the jolt it gave dispelled the fog at once and I found myself look-

ing at the water of the irrigation ditch. Then I heard it again much closer; it was don Juan's voice. He was telling me to pay attention to him, because his voice was my only guide. He ordered me to look at the bank of the stream and at the vegetation directly in front of me. I saw some reeds and a space which was clear of reeds. It was a small cove on the bank, a place where don Juan steps across to plunge his bucket and fill it with water. After a few moments don Juan ordered me to return to the fog and asked me again to pay attention to his voice, because he was going to guide me so I could learn how to move; he said that once I saw the bubbles I should board one of them and let it carry me.

I obeyed him and was at once surrounded by the green mist, and then I saw the tiny bubbles. I heard don Juan's voice again as a very strange and frightening rumble. Immediately upon hearing it I began losing my capacity to perceive the bubbles.

"Mount one of those bubbles," I heard him saying.

I struggled to maintain my perception of the green bubbles and still hear his voice. I don't know how long I fought to do that, when suddenly I was aware that I could listen to him and still keep sight of the bubbles, which kept on passing through, floating slowly out of my field of perception. Don Juan's voice kept on urging me to follow one of them and mount it.

I wondered how I was supposed to do that and automatically I voiced the word, "How." I felt that the word was very deep inside me and as it came out it carried me to the surface. The word was like a buoy that emerged out of my depth. I heard myself saying, "How," and I sounded like a dog howling. Don Juan howled back, also like a dog, and then he made some coyote sounds, and laughed. I thought it was very funny and I actually laughed.

Don Juan told me very calmly to let myself become affixed to a bubble by following it.

"Go back again," he said. "Go into the fog! Into the fog!"

I went back and noticed that the movement of the bubbles had slowed down and they had become as large as basketballs. In fact they were so large and slow that I could examine any one of them in great detail. They were not really bubbles, not like a soap bubble, nor like a balloon, nor any spherical container. They were not containers, yet they were contained. Nor were they round, although when I first perceived them I could have sworn they were round and the image that came to my mind was "bubbles." I viewed them as if I were looking through a window; that is, the frame of the window did not allow me to follow them but only permitted me to view them coming into and going out of my field of perception.

When I ceased to view them as bubbles, however, I was capable of following them; in the act of following them I became affixed to one of them and I floated with it. I truly felt I was moving. In fact I *was* the bubble, or that thing which resembled a bubble.

Then I heard the shrill sound of don Juan's voice. It jolted me and I lost my feeling of being "it." The sound was extremely frightening; it was a remote voice, very metallic, as if he were talking through a loud-speaker. I made out some of the words.

"Look at the banks," he said.

I saw a very large body of water. The water was rushing. I could hear the noise it made.

"Look at the banks," don Juan ordered me again.

I saw a concrete wall.

The sound of the water became terribly loud; the sound engulfed me. Then it ceased instantaneously, as if it had been cut off. I had the sensation of blackness, of sleep.

I became aware that I was immersed in the irrigation ditch. Don Juan was splashing water in my face as he hummed. Then he submerged me in the ditch. He pulled my head up, over the surface, and let me rest it on the bank as he held me by the back of my shirt collar. I had a most pleasant sensation in my arms and legs. I stretched them. My eyes were tired and they itched; I lifted my right hand to rub them. It was a difficult movement. My arm seemed to be heavy. I could hardly lift it out of the water, but when I did, my arm came out covered with a most astonishing mass of green mist. I held my arm in front of my eyes. I could see its contour as a darker mass of green surrounded by a most intense greenish glow. I got to my feet in a hurry and stood in the middle of the stream and looked at my body; my chest, arms, and legs were green, deep green. The hue was so intense that it gave me the feeling of a viscous substance. I looked like a figurine don Juan had made for me years before out of a datura root.

Don Juan told me to come out. I noticed an urgency in his voice.

"I'm green," I said.

"Cut it out," he said imperatively. "You have no time. Get out of there. The water is about to trap you. Get out of it! Out! Out!"

I panicked and jumped out.

"This time you must tell me everything that took place," he said matter-of-factly, as soon as we sat facing each other inside his room.

He was not interested in the sequence of my experience; he wanted to know only what I had encountered when he told me to look at the bank. He was interested in details. I described the wall I had seen.

"Was the wall to your left or to your right?" he asked.

I told him that the wall had really been in front of me. But he insisted that it had to be either to the left or to the right.

"When you first saw it, where was it? Close your eyes and don't open them until you have remembered."

He stood up and turned my body while I had my eyes closed until he had me facing east, the same direction I had faced when I was sitting in front of the stream. He asked me in which direction I had moved.

I said I had moved onward, ahead, in front of me. He insisted that I should remember and concentrate on the time when I was still viewing the water as bubbles.

"Which way did they flow?" he asked.

Don Juan urged me to recall, and finally I had to admit that the bubbles had seemed to be moving to my right. Yet I was not as absolutely sure as he wanted me to be. Under his probing I began to realize that I was incapable of classifying my perception. The bubbles had moved to my right when I first viewed them, but when they became larger they flowed everywhere. Some of them seemed to be coming directly at me, others seemed to go in every possible direction. There were bubbles moving above and below me. In fact they were all around me. I recollected hearing their fizzing; thus I must have perceived them with my ears as well as with my eyes.

When the bubbles became so large that I was able to "mount" one of them, I 'saw' them rubbing each other like balloons.

My excitement increased as I recollected the details of my perception. Don Juan, however, was completely uninterested. I told him that I had seen the bubbles fizzing. It was not a purely auditory or purely visual effect, but something undifferentiated, yet crystal clear; the bubbles rasped against each other. I did not see or hear their movement, I felt it; I was part of the sound and the motion.

As I recounted my experience I became deeply moved. I held his arm and shook it in an outburst of great agitation. I had realized that the bubbles had no outer limit; nonetheless, they were contained and their edges changed shape and were uneven and jagged. The bubbles merged and separated with great speed, yet their movement was not dazzling. Their movement was fast and at the same time slow.

Another thing I remembered, as I recounted my experience, was the quality of color that the bubbles seemed to possess. They were transparent and very bright and seemed almost green, although it was not a hue, as I am accustomed to perceiving hues.

"You're stalling," don Juan said. "Those things are not important. You're dwelling on the wrong items. The direction is the only important issue."

I could only remember that I had moved without any point of reference, but don Juan concluded that since the bubbles had flowed consistently to my right—south—at the beginning, the south was the direction with which I had to be concerned. He again urged me imperatively to recollect whether the wall was to my right or my left. I strained to remember.

When don Juan "called me" and I surfaced, so to speak, I think I had the wall to my left. I was very close to it and was able to distinguish the grooves and protuberances of the wooden armature or mold into which the concrete had been poured. Very thin strips of wood had been used and the pattern they had created was compact. The wall was very high. One end of it was visible to me, and I noticed that it did not have a corner but curved around.

He sat in silence for a moment, as if he were thinking how to decipher the meaning of my experience; he finally said that I had not accomplished a great deal, that I had fallen short of what he expected me to do.

"What was I supposed to do?"

He did not answer but made a puckering gesture with his lips.

"You did very well," he said. "Today you learned that a brujo uses the water to move."

"But did I *see?*"

He looked at me with a curious expression. He rolled his eyes and said that I had to go into the green mist a good many times until I could answer that question myself. He changed the direction of our conversation in a subtle way, saying I had not really learned how to move using the water, but I had learned that a brujo could do that, and he had deliberately told me to look at the bank of the stream so I could check my movement.

"You moved very fast," he said, "as fast as a man who knows how to perform this technique. I had a hard time keeping up with you."

I begged him to explain what had happened to me from the beginning. He laughed, shaking his head slowly as though in disbelief.

"You always insist on knowing things from the beginning," he said. "But there's no beginning; the beginning is only in your thought."

"I think the beginning was when I sat on the bank and smoked," I said.

"But before you smoked I had to figure out what to do with you," he said. "I would have to tell you what I did and I can't do that, because it would take me to still another point. So perhaps things would be clearer to you if you didn't think about beginnings."

"Then tell me what happened after I sat on the bank and smoked."

"I think you have told me that already," he said, laughing.

"Was anything I did of any importance, don Juan?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You followed my directions very well and had no problem getting into and out of the fog. Then you listened to my voice and returned to the surface every time I called you. That was the exercise. The rest was very easy. You simply let the fog carry you. You behaved as though you knew what to do. When you were very far away I called you again and made you look at the bank, so you would know how far you had gone. Then I pulled you back."

"You mean, don Juan, that I really traveled in the water?"

"You did. And very far too."

"How far?"

"You wouldn't believe it."

I tried to coax him into telling me, but he dropped the subject and said he had to leave for a while. I insisted that he should at least give me a hint.

"I don't like to be kept in the dark," I said.

"You keep yourself in the dark," he said. "Think about the wall you saw. Sit down here on your mat and remember every detail of it. Then perhaps you yourself may discover how far you went. All I know now is that you traveled very far. I know that because I had a terrible time pulling you back. If I had not been around, you might have wandered off and never returned, in which case all that would be left of you now would be your dead body on the side of the stream. Or perhaps you might have returned by yourself. With you I'm not sure. So judging by the effort it took me to bring you back, I'd say you were clearly in . . ."

He made a long pause; he stared at me in a friendly way.

"I would go as far as the mountains of central Mexico," he said. "I don't know how far you would go, perhaps as far as Los Angeles, or perhaps even as far as Brazil."

Don Juan returned the next day late in the afternoon. In the meantime I had written down everything I could recollect about my perception. While I wrote, it occurred to me to follow the banks up and down the stream in each direction and corroborate whether I had actually seen a feature on either side that might have elicited in me the image of a wall. I conjectured that don Juan might have made me walk, in a state of stupor, and then might have made me focus my attention on some wall on the way. In the hours that elapsed between the time I first detected the fog and the time I got out of the ditch and went back to his house, I calculated that if he had made me walk, we could have walked, at the most, two and a half miles. So I followed the banks of the stream for about three miles in each direction, carefully observing every feature which might have been pertinent to my vision of the wall. The stream was, as far as I could tell, a plain canal used for irrigation. It was four to five feet wide throughout its length and I could not find any visible features in it that would have reminded me or forced the image of a concrete wall.

When don Juan arrived at his house in the late afternoon I accosted him and insisted on reading my account to him. He refused to listen and made me sit down. He sat facing me. He was not smiling. He seemed to be thinking, judging by the penetrating look in his eyes, which were fixed above the horizon.

"I think you must be aware by now," he said in a tone that was suddenly very severe, "that everything is mortally dangerous. The water is as deadly as the guardian. If you don't watch out the water will trap you. It nearly did that yesterday. But in order to be trapped a man has to be willing. There's your trouble. You're willing to abandon yourself."

I did not know what he was talking about. His attack on

me had been so sudden that I was disoriented. I feebly asked him to explain himself. He reluctantly mentioned that he had gone to the water canyon and had "seen" the spirit of the water hole and had the profound conviction I had flubbed my chances to "see" the water.

"How?" I asked, truly baffled.

"The spirit is a force," he said, "and as such, it responds only to strength. You cannot indulge in its presence."

"When did I indulge?"

"Yesterday, when you became green in the water."

"I did not indulge. I thought it was a very important moment and I told you what was happening to me."

"Who are you to think or decide what is important? You know nothing about the forces you're tapping. The spirit of the water hole exists out there and could have helped you; in fact it was helping you until you flubbed it. Now I don't know what will be the outcome of your doings. You have succumbed to the force of the water-hole spirit and now it can take you any time."

"Was it wrong to look at myself turning green?"

"You abandoned yourself. You willed to abandon yourself. That was wrong. I have told you this already and I will repeat it again. You can survive in the world of a brujo only if you are a warrior. A warrior treats everything with respect and does not trample on anything unless he has to. You did not treat the water with respect yesterday. Usually you behave very well. However, yesterday you abandoned yourself to your death, like a goddamned fool. A warrior does not abandon himself to anything, not even to his death. A warrior is not a willing partner; a warrior is not available, and if he involves himself with something, you can be sure that he is aware of what he is doing."

I did not know what to say. Don Juan was almost angry.

That disturbed me. Don Juan had rarely behaved in such a way with me. I told him that I truly had no idea I was doing something wrong. After some minutes of tense silence he took off his hat and smiled and told me that I had to stay away and not return to his house until I felt I had gained control over my indulging self. He stressed that I had to avoid water and keep it from touching the surface of my body for three or four months.

"I don't think I could go without taking a shower," I said.

Don Juan laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks.

"You can't go without a shower! At times you're so weak I think you're putting me on. But it is not a joke. At times you really have no control and the forces of your life take you freely."

I raised the point that it was humanly impossible to be controlled at all times. He maintained that for a warrior there was nothing out of control. I brought up the idea of accidents and said that what happened to me at the water canal could certainly be classed as an accident, since I neither meant it nor was I aware of my improper behavior. I talked about different people who had misfortunes that could be explained as accidents; I talked especially about Lucas, a very fine old Yaqui man who had suffered a serious injury when the truck he was driving overturned.

"It seems to me it is impossible to avoid accidents," I said. "No man can control everything around him."

"True," don Juan said cuttingly. "But not everything is an unavoidable accident. Lucas doesn't live like a warrior. If he did, he'd know that he is waiting and what he is waiting for; and he wouldn't have driven that truck while he was drunk. He crashed against the rock side of the road because he was drunk and mangled his body for nothing.

"Life for a warrior is an exercise in strategy," don Juan

went on. "But you want to find the meaning of life. A warrior doesn't care about meanings. If Lucas lived like a warrior—and he had a chance to, as we all have a chance to—he would set his life strategically. Thus if he couldn't avoid an accident that crushed his ribs, he would have found means to offset that handicap, or avoid its consequences, or battle against them. If Lucas were a warrior he wouldn't be sitting in his dingy house dying of starvation. He would be battling to the end."

I posed an alternative to don Juan, using him as an example, and asked him what would be the outcome if he himself were to be involved in an accident that severed his legs.

"If I cannot help it, and lose my legs," he said, "I won't be able to be a man any more, so I will join that which is waiting for me out there."

He made a sweeping gesture with his hand to point all around him.

I argued that he had misunderstood me. I had meant to point out that it was impossible for any single individual to foresee all the variables involved in his day-to-day actions.

"All I can say to you," don Juan said, "is that a warrior is never available; never is he standing on the road waiting to be clobbered. Thus he cuts to a minimum his chances of the unforeseen. What you call accidents are, most of the time, very easy to avoid, except for fools who are living helter-skelter."

"It is not possible to live strategically all the time," I said. "Imagine that someone is waiting for you with a powerful rifle with a telescopic sight; he could spot you accurately five hundred yards away. What would you do?"

Don Juan looked at me with an air of disbelief and then broke into laughter.

"What would you do?" I urged him.

"If someone is waiting for me with a rifle with a telescopic sight?" he said, obviously mocking me.

"If someone is hiding out of sight, waiting for you. You won't have a chance. You can't stop a bullet."

"No. I can't. But I still don't understand your point."

"My point is that all your strategy cannot be of any help in a situation like that."

"Oh, but it can. If someone is waiting for me with a powerful rifle with a telescopic sight I simply will not come around."

13

My next attempt at "seeing" took place on September 3, 1969. Don Juan made me smoke two bowls of the mixture. The immediate effects were identical to those I had experienced during previous attempts. I remember that when my body was thoroughly numb, don Juan held me by my right armpit and made me walk into the thick desert chaparral that grows for miles around his house. I cannot recollect what I or don Juan did after we entered the brush, nor can I recall how long we walked; at a certain moment I found I was sitting on top of a small hill. Don Juan was sitting on my left side, touching me. I could not feel him but I could see him with the corner of my eye. I had the feeling that he had been talking to me although I could not remember his words. Yet I felt I knew exactly what he had said, in spite of the fact that I could not bring it back into my clear memory. I had the sensation that his words were like the cars of a train which was moving away and his last word was like a square caboose. I knew what that last word was but I could not say it or think clearly about it. It was a state of half-wakefulness with a dreamlike image of a train of words.

Then very faintly I heard don Juan's voice talking to me.

"Now you must look at me," he said as he turned my head to face him. He repeated the statement three or four times.

I looked and detected right away the same glowing effect I had perceived twice before while looking at his face; it was a mesmerizing movement, an undulatory shift of light within contained areas. There were no definite boundaries to those areas, and yet the waving light never spilled over but moved within invisible limits.

I scanned the glowing object in front of me and immediately it started to lose its glow and the familiar features of don Juan's face emerged, or rather became superimposed on the fading glow. I must have then focused my gaze again; don Juan's features faded and the glow intensified. I had placed my attention on an area which must have been his left eye. I noticed that there the movement of the glow was not contained. I detected something perhaps resembling explosions of sparks. The explosions were rhythmical and actually sent out something like particles of light that flew out with apparent force toward me and then retreated as if they were rubber fibers.

Don Juan must have turned my head around. Suddenly I found myself looking at a plowed field.

"Now look ahead," I heard don Juan saying.

In front of me, perhaps two hundred yards away, was a large, long hill; its entire slope had been plowed. Horizontal furrows ran parallel to each other from the bottom to the very top of the hill. I noticed that in the plowed field there were quantities of small rocks and three huge boulders that interrupted the lineality of the furrows. There were some bushes right in front of me which prevented me from observing the details of a ravine or water canyon at the bottom of the hill. From where I was, the canyon appeared as a deep cut, with green vegetation markedly different from the barren hill. The

greenness seemed to be trees that grew in the bottom of the canyon. I felt a breeze blowing in my eyes. I had a feeling of peace and profound quietness. There were no sounds of birds or insects.

Don Juan spoke to me again. It took me a moment to understand what he was saying.

"Do you see a man in that field?" he kept on asking.

I wanted to tell him that there was no man in that field, but I could not vocalize the words. Don Juan took my head in his hands from behind—I could see his fingers over my eyebrows and on my cheeks—and made me pan over the field, moving my head slowly from right to left and then in the opposite direction.

"Watch every detail. Your life may depend on it," I heard him saying over and over.

He made me pan four times over the 180-degree visual horizon in front of me. At one moment, when he had moved my head to face the extreme left, I thought I detected something moving in the field. I had a brief perception of movement with the corner of my right eye. He began to shift my head back to my right and I was capable of focusing my gaze on the plowed field. I saw a man walking alongside the furrows. He was a plain man dressed like a Mexican peasant; he wore sandals, a pair of light gray pants, a long-sleeved beige shirt, and a straw hat, and carried a light brown bag with a strap over his right shoulder.

Don Juan must have noticed that I had seen the man. He asked me repeatedly if the man was looking at me or if he was coming toward me. I wanted to tell him that the man was walking away and that his back was turned to me, but I could only say, "No." Don Juan said that if the man turned and came to me I should yell and he would turn my head away in order to protect me.

I had no sense of fear or apprehension or involvement. I coldly watched the scene. The man stopped walking at the middle of the field. He stood with his right foot on a ledge of a large round boulder, as if he were tying his sandal. Then he straightened up, pulled a string from his bag, and wrapped it around his left hand. He turned his back to me and, facing the top of the hill, began scanning the area in front of him. I thought he was scanning because of the way he moved his head, which he kept turning slowly to his right; I saw him in profile, and then he began to turn his whole body toward me until he was looking at me. He actually jerked his head, or moved it in such a way that I knew beyond a doubt that he had seen me. He extended his left arm in front of him, pointing to the ground, and holding his arm in that position he began to walk toward me.

"He's coming!" I yelled without any difficulty.

Don Juan must have turned my head around, for next I was looking at the chaparral. He told me not to gaze but look "lightly" at things and scan over them. He said that he was going to stand a short distance in front of me and then walk toward me, and that I should gaze at him until I saw his glow.

I saw don Juan moving to a spot perhaps twenty yards away. He walked with such incredible speed and agility that I could hardly believe it was don Juan. He turned around and faced me and ordered me to gaze at him.

His face was glowing; it looked like a blotch of light. The light seemed to spill over his chest almost to the middle of his body. It was as if I were looking at a light through my half-closed eyelids. The glow seemed to expand and recede. He must have begun to walk toward me because the light became more intense and more discernible.

He said something to me. I struggled to understand and lost my view of the glow, and then I saw don Juan as I see him in

everyday life; he was a couple of feet away from me. He sat down facing me.

As I pinpointed my attention on his face I began to perceive a vague glow. Then it was as if his face were crisscrossed by thin beams of light. Don Juan's face looked as if someone were shining tiny mirrors on it; as the light became more intense the face lost its contours and was again an amorphous glowing object. I perceived once more the effect of pulsating explosions of light emanating from an area which must have been his left eye. I did not focus my attention on it, but deliberately gazed at an adjacent area which I surmised to be his right eye. I caught at once the sight of a clear, transparent pool of light. It was a liquid light.

I noticed that perceiving was more than sighting; it was feeling. The pool of dark, liquid light had an extraordinary depth. It was "friendly," "kind." The light that emanated from it did not explode but whirled slowly inward, creating exquisite reflections. The glow had a very lovely and delicate way of touching me, of soothing me, which gave me a sensation of exquisiteness.

I saw a symmetrical ring of brilliant dashes of light that expanded rhythmically on the vertical plain of the glowing area. The ring expanded to cover nearly all the glowing surface and then contracted to a point of light in the middle of the brilliant pool. I saw the ring expanding and contracting several times. Then I deliberately moved back without losing my gaze and was capable of seeing both eyes. I distinguished the rhythm of both types of light explosions. The left eye sent out dashes of light that actually protruded out of the vertical plain, while the right eye sent out dashes that radiated without protruding. The rhythm of the two eyes was alternating, the light of the left eye exploded outward while the radiating light beams of the right eye contracted and whirled

inward. Then the light of the right eye extended to cover the whole glowing surface while the exploding light of the left eye receded.

Don Juan must have turned me around once more, for I was again looking at the plowed field. I heard him telling me to watch the man.

The man was standing by the boulder looking at me. I could not distinguish his features; his hat covered most of his face. After a moment he tucked his bag under his right arm and began to walk away toward my right. He walked almost to the end of the plowed area, changed direction, and took a few steps toward the gully. Then I lost control of my focusing and he vanished and so did the total scenery. The image of the desert shrubs became superimposed on it.

I do not recollect how I returned to don Juan's house, nor do I remember what he did to me to "bring me back." When I woke up I was lying on my straw mat in don Juan's room. He came to my side and helped me up. I was dizzy; my stomach was upset. Don Juan in a very quick and efficient manner dragged me to the shrubs at the side of his house. I got sick and he laughed.

Afterwards I felt better. I looked at my watch; it was eleven P.M. I went back to sleep and by one o'clock the next afternoon I thought I was myself again.

Don Juan kept asking me how I felt. I had the sensation of being absent-minded. I could not really concentrate. I walked around the house for a while under don Juan's close scrutiny. He followed me around. I felt there was nothing to do and I went back to sleep. I woke up in the late afternoon feeling much better. I found a great many mashed leaves around me. In fact when I woke up I was lying on my stomach on top of a pile of leaves. Their scent was very strong. I remember becoming aware of the scent before I fully woke up.

I wandered to the back and found don Juan sitting by the irrigation ditch. When he saw me approaching he made frantic gestures to make me stop and go back into the house.

"Run inside!" he yelled.

I ran into the house and he joined me a while later.

"Don't ever come after me," he said. "If you want to see me wait for me here."

I apologized. He told me not to waste myself in silly apologies which did not have the power to cancel my acts. He said that he had had a very difficult time bringing me back and that he had been interceding for me at the water.

"We have to take a chance now and wash you in the water," he said.

I assured him I felt fine. He gazed into my eyes for a long time.

"Come with me," he said. "I'm going to put you in the water."

"I'm fine," I said. "Look, I'm taking notes."

He pulled me up from my mat with considerable force.

"Don't indulge!" he said. "In no time at all you will fall asleep again. Maybe I won't be able to wake you up this time."

We ran to the back of his house. Before we reached the water he told me in a most dramatic tone to shut my eyes tight and not open them until he said to. He told me that if I gazed at the water even for an instant I might die. He led me by the hand and dunked me into the irrigation ditch head first.

I kept my eyes shut as he went on submerging and pulling me out of the water for hours. The change I experienced was remarkable. Whatever was wrong with me before I entered the water was so subtle that I did not really notice it until I compared it with the feeling of well-being and alertness I had while don Juan kept me in the irrigation canal.

Water got into my nose and I began to sneeze. Don Juan pulled me out and led me, with my eyes still closed, into the house. He made me change my clothes and then guided me into his room, had me sit down on my mat, arranged the direction of my body, and then told me to open my eyes. I opened them and what I saw caused me to jump back and grab onto his leg. I experienced a tremendously confusing moment. Don Juan rapped me with his knuckles on the very top of my head. It was a quick blow which was not hard or painful but somehow shocking.

"What is the matter with you? What did you see?" he asked.

Upon opening my eyes I had seen the same scene I had watched before. I had seen the same man. This time, however, he was almost touching me. I saw his face. There was an air of familiarity about it. I almost knew who he was. The scene vanished when don Juan hit me on the head.

I looked up at don Juan. He had his hand ready to hit me again. He laughed and asked if I would like to get another blow. I let go of his leg and relaxed on my mat. He ordered me to look straight ahead and not to turn around for any reason in the direction of the water at the back of his house.

I then noticed for the first time that it was pitch black in the room. For a moment I was not sure whether I had my eyes open. I touched them with my hands to make sure. I called don Juan loudly and told him something was wrong with my eyes; I could not see at all, while a moment before I had seen him ready to hit me. I heard his laughter over my head to my right, and then he lit his kerosene lantern. My eyes adapted to the light in a matter of seconds. Everything was as it always had been: the wattle-and-daub walls of the room and the strangely contorted, dry medicinal roots hanging on them; the bundles of herbs; the thatched roof; the kerosene lantern hanging from a beam. I had seen the room hundreds of times,

yet this time I felt there was something unique about it and about myself. This was the first time I did not believe in the final "reality" of my perception. I had been edging toward that feeling and I had perhaps intellectualized it at various times, but never had I been at the brink of a serious doubt. This time, however, I did not believe the room was "real," and for a moment I had the strange sensation that it was a scene which would vanish if don Juan rapped me on top of my head with his knuckles.

I began to shiver without being cold. Nervous spasms ran down my spine. My head felt heavy, especially in the area right above my neck.

I complained that I did not feel well and told him what I had seen. He laughed at me, saying that to succumb to fright was a miserable indulgence.

"You're frightened without being afraid," he said. "You saw the ally staring at you, big deal. Wait until you have him face to face before you shit in your pants."

He told me to get up and walk to my car without turning around in the direction of the water, and to wait for him while he got a rope and a shovel. He made me drive to a place where we had found a tree stump. We proceeded to dig it out in the darkness. I worked terribly hard for hours. We did not get the stump out but I felt much better. We went back to his house and ate and things were again perfectly "real" and commonplace.

"What happened to me?" I asked. "What did I do yesterday?"

"You smoked me and then you smoked an ally," he said.

"I beg your pardon?"

Don Juan laughed and said that next I was going to demand that he start telling me everything from the beginning.

"You smoked me," he repeated. "You gazed into my face,

into my eyes. You saw the lights that mark a man's face. I am a sorcerer, you saw that in my eyes. You did not know that, though, because this is the first time you've done it. The eyes of men are not all alike. You will soon find that out. Then you smoked an ally."

"Do you mean the man in the field?"

"That was not a man, that was an ally beckoning you."

"Where did we go? Where were we when I saw that man, I mean that ally?"

Don Juan made a gesture with his chin to point out an area in front of his house and said that he had taken me to the top of a small hill. I said that the scenery I had viewed had nothing to do with the desert chaparral around his house and he replied that the ally that had "beckoned" me was not from the surroundings.

"Where is it from?"

"I'll take you there very soon."

"What is the meaning of my vision?"

"You were learning to *see*, that was all; but now you are about to lose your pants because you indulge; you have abandoned yourself to your fright. Maybe you should describe everything you saw."

When I started to describe the way his own face had appeared to me, he made me stop and said that it was of no importance whatsoever. I told him that I had almost *seen* him as a "luminous egg." He said that "almost" was not enough and that *seeing* was going to take me a great deal of time and work.

He was interested in the scene of the plowed field and in every detail I could remember about the man.

"That ally was beckoning you," he said. "I made you move your head when he came to you not because he was endangering you but because it is better to wait. You are not in a hurry.

A warrior is never idle and never in a hurry. To meet an ally without being prepared is like attacking a lion with your farts."

I liked the metaphor. We had a delightful moment of laughter.

"What would've happened if you hadn't moved my head?"

"You would've had to move your head yourself."

"And if I didn't?"

"The ally would have come to you and scared you stiff. If you had been alone he might have killed you. It is not advisable for you to be alone in the mountains or the desert until you can defend yourself. An ally migh catch you alone there and make mincemeat out of you."

"What was the meaning of the acts he performed?"

"By looking at you he meant he welcomes you. He showed you that you need a spirit catcher and a pouch, but not from this area; his bag was from another part of the country. You have three stumbling blocks in your way that make you stop; those were the boulders. And you definitely are going to get your best powers in water canyons and gullies; the ally pointed out the gully to you. The rest of the scene was meant to help you locate the exact place to find him. I know now where the place is. I will take you there very soon."

"Do you mean that the scenery I saw really exists?"

"Of course."

"Where?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"How would I find that area?"

"I cannot tell you that either, and not because I don't want to but because I simply don't know how to tell you."

I wanted to know the meaning of seeing the same scene while I was in his room. Don Juan laughed and imitated me holding onto his leg.

"That was a reaffirmation that the ally wants you," he said. "He made sure you or I knew that he was welcoming you."

"What about the face I saw?"

"It is a familiar face to you because you know him. You have seen it before. Maybe it is the face of your death. You got frightened but that was your carelessness. He was waiting for you and when he showed up you succumbed to fright. Fortunately I was there to hit you or he would've turned against you, which would have been only proper. To meet an ally a man must be a spotless warrior or the ally may turn against him and destroy him."

Don Juan dissuaded me from going back to Los Angeles the next morning. Apparently he thought I still had not totally recovered. He insisted that I sit inside his room facing the southeast, in order to preserve my strength. He sat to my left, handed me my notebook, and said that this time I had him pinned down; he not only had to stay with me, he also had to talk to me.

"I have to take you to the water again in the twilight," he said. "You're not solid yet and you shouldn't be alone today. I'll keep you company all morning; in the afternoon you'll be in better shape."

His concern made me feel very apprehensive.

"What's wrong with me?" I asked.

"You've tapped an ally."

"What do you mean by that?"

"We must not talk about allies today. Let us talk about anything else."

I really did not want to talk at all. I had begun to feel anxious and restless. Don Juan apparently found the situation utterly ludicrous; he laughed till the tears came.

"Don't tell me that at a time when you should talk you are not going to find anything to say," he said, his eyes shining with a mischievous glint.

His mood was very soothing to me.

There was only one topic that interested me at that moment: the ally. His face was so familiar; it was not as if I knew him or as if I had seen him before. It was something else. Every time I began to think about his face my mind experienced a bombardment of other thoughts, as if some part of myself knew the secret but did not allow the rest of me to come close to it. The sensation of the ally's face being familiar was so eerie that it had forced me into a state of morbid melancholy. Don Juan had said that it might have been the face of my death. I think that statement had clinched me. I wanted desperately to ask about it and I had the clear sensation that don Juan was holding me back. I took a couple of deep breaths and blurted out a question.

"What is death, don Juan?"

"I don't know," he said, smiling.

"I mean, how would you describe death? I want your opinions. I think everybody has definite opinions about death."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

I had the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* in the trunk of my car. It occurred to me to use it as a topic of conversation, since it dealt with death. I said I was going to read it to him and began to get up. He made me sit down and went out and got the book himself.

"The morning is a bad time for sorcerers," he said as an explanation for my having to stay put. "You're too weak to leave my room. Inside here you are protected. If you were to wander off now, chances are that you would find a terrible disaster. An ally could kill you on the road or in the bush, and later on when they found your body they would say that you had either died mysteriously or had an accident."

I was in no position or mood to question his decisions, so I stayed put nearly all morning reading and explaining some parts of the book to him. He listened attentively and did not interrupt me at all. Twice I had to stop for short periods of time while he brought some water and food, but as soon as he was free again he urged me to continue reading. He seemed to be very interested.

When I finished he looked at me.

"I don't understand why those people talk about death as if death were like life," he said softly.

"Maybe that's the way they understand it. Do you think the Tibetans *see?*"

"Hardly. When a man learns to *see*, not a single thing he knows prevails. Not a single one. If the Tibetans could *see* they could tell right away that not a single thing is any longer the same. Once we *see*, nothing is known; nothing remains as we used to know it when we didn't *see*."

"Perhaps, don Juan, *seeing* is not the same for everyone."

"True. It's not the same. Still, that does not mean that the meanings of life prevail. When one learns to *see*, not a single thing is the same."

"Tibetans obviously think that death is like life. What do you think death is like, yourself?" I asked.

"I don't think death is like anything and I think the Tibetans must be talking about something else. At any rate, what they're talking about is not death."

"What do you think they're talking about?"

"Maybe you can tell me that. You're the one who reads."

I tried to say something else but he began to laugh.

"Perhaps the Tibetans really *see*," don Juan went on, "in which case they must have realized that what they *see* makes no sense at all and they wrote that bunch of crap because it doesn't make any difference to them; in which case what they wrote is not crap at all."

"I really don't care about what the Tibetans have to say," I said, "but I certainly care about what you have to say. I would like to hear what you think about death."

He stared at me for an instant and then giggled. He opened his eyes and raised his eyebrows in a comical gesture of surprise.

"Death is a whorl," he said. "Death is the face of the ally; death is a shiny cloud over the horizon; death is the whisper of Mescalito in your ears; death is the toothless mouth of the guardian; death is Genaro sitting on his head; death is me talking; death is you and your writing pad; death is nothing. Nothing! It is here yet it isn't here at all."

Don Juan laughed with great delight. His laughter was like a song, it had a sort of dancing rhythm.

"I make no sense, huh?" don Juan said. "I cannot tell you what death is like. But perhaps I could tell you about your own death. There is no way of knowing what it will be like for sure; however, I could tell you what it may be like."

I became frightened at that point and argued that I only wanted to know what death appeared to be like to him; I emphasized that I was interested in his opinions about death in a general sense, but did not care to know about the particulars of anybody's personal death, especially my own.

"I can't talk about death except in personal terms," he said. "You wanted me to tell you about death. All right! Then don't be afraid of hearing about your own death."

I admitted that I was too nervous to talk about it. I said that I wanted to talk about death in general terms, as he himself had done when he told me that at the time of his son Eulalio's death, life and death mixed like a fog of crystals.

"I told you that my son's life expanded at the time of his personal death," he said. "I was not talking about death in general but about my son's death. Death, whatever it is, made his life expand."

I definitely wanted to steer the conversation out of the realm of particulars, and mentioned that I had been reading accounts of people who had died for several minutes and had been revived through medical techniques. In all the cases I had read, the persons involved had made statements, upon reviving, that they could not recollect anything at all; that dying was simply a sensation of blacking out.

"That's perfectly understandable," he said. "Death has two stages. The first is a blackout. It is a meaningless stage, very similar to the first effect of Mescalito, in which one experiences a lightness that makes one feel happy, complete, and that everything in the world is at ease. But that is only a shallow state; it soon vanishes and one enters a new realm, a realm of harshness and power. That second stage is the real encounter with Mescalito. Death is very much like this. The first stage is a shallow blackout. The second, however, is the real stage where one meets with death; it is a brief moment, after the first blackout, when we find that we are, somehow, ourselves again. It is then that death smashes against us with quiet fury and power until it dissolves our lives into nothing."

"How can you be sure that you are talking about death?"

"I have my ally. The little smoke has shown me my unmistakable death with great clarity. This is why I can only talk about personal death."

Don Juan's words caused me a profound apprehension and a dramatic ambivalence. I had a feeling he was going to describe the overt, commonplace details of my death and tell me how or when I was going to die. The mere thought of knowing that made me despair and at the same time provoked my curiosity. I could have asked him to describe his own death, of course, but I felt that such a request would be rather rude and I ruled it out automatically.

Don Juan seemed to be enjoying my conflict. His body convulsed with laughter.

"Do you want to know what your death may be like?" he asked me with childlike delight in his face.

I found his mischievous pleasure in teasing me rather comforting. It almost took the edge off my apprehension.

"O.K., tell me," I said, and my voice cracked.

He had a formidable explosion of laughter. He held his stomach and rolled on his side and mockingly repeated, " 'O.K., tell me,' " with a crack in his voice. Then he straightened out and sat down, assuming a feigned stiffness, and in a tremulous voice he said, "The second stage of your death may very well be as follows."

His eyes examined me with apparently genuine curiosity. I laughed. I clearly realized that his making fun was the only device that could dull the edge of the idea of one's death.

"You drive a great deal," he went on saying, "so you may find yourself, at a given moment, behind the wheel again. It will be a very fast sensation that won't give you time to think. Suddenly, let's say, you would find yourself driving, as you have done thousands of times. But before you could wonder about yourself, you would notice a strange formation in front of your windshield. If you looked closer you'd realize that it is a cloud that looks like a shiny whorl. It would resemble, let's say, a face, right in the middle of the sky in front of you. As you watched it, you would see it moving backward until it was only a brilliant point in the distance, and then you would notice that it began moving toward you again; it would pick up speed and in a blink of an eye it would smash against the windshield of your car. You are strong; I'm sure it would take death a couple of whams to get you.

"By then you would know where you were and what was happening to you; the face would recede again to a position on the horizon, would pick up speed and smash against you. The face would enter inside you and then you'd know—it

was the ally's face all the time, or it was me talking, or you writing. Death was nothing all the time. Nothing. It was a little dot lost in the sheets of your notebook. And yet it would enter inside you with uncontrollable force and would make you expand; it would make you flat and extend you over the sky and the earth and beyond. And you would be like a fog of tiny crystals moving, moving away."

I was very taken by his description of my death. I had expected to hear something so different. I could not say anything for a long time.

"Death enters through the belly," he continued. "Right through the gap of the will. That area is the most important and sensitive part of man. It is the area of the will and also the area through which all of us die. I know it because my ally has guided me to that stage. A sorcerer tunes his will by letting his death overtake him, and when he is flat and begins to expand, his impeccable will takes over and assembles the fog into one person again."

Don Juan made a strange gesture. He opened his hands like two fans, lifted them to the level of his elbows, turned them until his thumbs were touching his sides, and then brought them slowly together at the center of his body over his navel. He kept them there for a moment. His arms shivered with the strain. Then he brought them up until the tips of his middle fingers touched his forehead, and then pulled them down in the same position to the center of his body.

It was a formidable gesture. Don Juan had performed it with such force and beauty that I was spellbound.

"It is his will which assembles a sorcerer," he said, "but as his old age makes him feeble his will wanes and a moment unavoidably comes when he is no longer capable of commanding his will. He then has nothing with which to oppose the silent force of his death, and his life becomes like the

lives of all his fellow men, an expanding fog moving beyond its limits."

Don Juan stared at me and stood up. I was shivering.

"You can go to the bushes now," he said. "It is afternoon."

I needed to go but I did not dare. I felt perhaps more jumpy than afraid. However, I was no longer apprehensive about the ally.

Don Juan said that it did not matter how I felt as long as I was "solid." He assured me I was in perfect shape and could safely go into the bushes as long as I did not get close to the water.

"That is another matter," he said. "I need to wash you once more, so stay away from the water."

Later on he wanted me to drive him to the nearby town. I mentioned that driving would be a welcome change for me because I was still shaky; the idea that a sorcerer actually played with his death was quite gruesome to me.

"To be a sorcerer is a terrible burden," he said in a reassuring tone. "I've told you that it is much better to learn to *see*. A man who *sees* is everything; in comparison, the sorcerer is a sad fellow."

"What is sorcery, don Juan?"

He looked at me for a long time as he shook his head almost imperceptibly.

"Sorcery is to apply one's will to a key joint," he said. "Sorcery is interference. A sorcerer searches and finds the key joint of anything he wants to affect and then he applies his will to it. A sorcerer doesn't have to *see* to be a sorcerer, all he has to know is how to use his will."

I asked him to explain what he meant by a key joint. He thought for a while and then he said that he knew what my car was.

"It's obviously a machine," I said.

"I mean your car is the spark plugs. That's its key joint for me. I can apply my will to it and your car won't work."

Don Juan got into my car and sat down. He beckoned me to do likewise as he made himself comfortable on the seat.

"Watch what I do," he said. "I'm a crow, so first I'll make my feathers loose."

He shivered his entire body. His movements reminded me of a sparrow wetting its feathers in a puddle. He lowered his head like a bird dipping its beak into the water.

"That feels really good," he said, and began to laugh.

His laughter was strange. It had a very peculiar mesmerizing effect on me. I recollected having heard him laugh in that manner many times before. Perhaps the reason I had never become overtly aware of it was that he had never laughed like that long enough in my presence.

"A crow loosens its neck next," he said, and began twisting his neck and rubbing his cheeks on his shoulders. "Then he looks at the world with one eye and then with the other."

His head shook as he allegedly shifted his view of the world from one eye to the other. The pitch of his laughter became higher. I had the absurd feeling that he was going to turn into a crow in front of my eyes. I wanted to laugh it off but I was almost paralyzed. I actually felt some kind of enveloping force around me. I was not afraid nor was I dizzy or sleepy. My faculties were unimpaired, to the best of my judgment.

"Turn on your car now," don Juan said.

I turned on the starter and automatically stepped on the gas pedal. The starter began to grind without igniting the engine. Don Juan's laughter was a soft, rhythmical cackle. I tried it again; and again. I spent perhaps ten minutes grinding the starter of my car. Don Juan cackled all that time. Then I gave up and sat there with a heavy head.

He stopped laughing and scrutinized me and I "knew" then

that his laughter had forced me into a sort of hypnotic trance. Although I had been thoroughly aware of what was taking place, I felt I was not myself. During the time I could not start my car I was very docile, almost numb. It was as if don Juan was not only doing something to my car but also to me. When he stopped cackling I was convinced the spell was over, and impetuously I turned on the starter again. I had the certainty don Juan had only mesmerized me with his laughter and made me believe I could not start my car. With the corner of my eye I saw him looking curiously at me as I ground the motor and pumped the gas furiously.

Don Juan patted me gently and said that fury would make me "solid" and perhaps I would not need to be washed in the water again. The more furious I could get, the quicker I could recover from my encounter with the ally.

"Don't be embarrassed," I heard don Juan saying. "Kick the car."

His natural everyday laughter exploded, and I felt ridiculous and laughed sheepishly.

After a while don Juan said he had released the car. It started!

14

September 28, 1969

There was something eerie about don Juan's house. For a moment I though he was hiding somewhere around the place to scare me. I called out to him and then gathered enough nerve to walk inside. Don Juan was not there. I put the two bags of groceries I had brought on a pile of firewood and sat down to wait for him, as I had done dozens of times before. But for the first time in my years of associating with don Juan I was afraid to stay alone in his house. I felt a presence, as if someone invisible was there with me. I remembered then that years before I had had the same vague feeling that something unknown was prowling around me when I was alone. I jumped to my feet and ran out of the house.

I had come to see don Juan to tell him that the cumulative effects of the task of "seeing" was taking its toll on me. I had begun to feel uneasy; vaguely apprehensive without any overt reason; tired without being fatigued. Then my reaction at being alone in don Juan's house brought back the total memory of how my fear had built up in the past.

The fear traced back to years before, when don Juan had forced the very strange confrontation between a sorceress, a woman he called "la Catalina," and me. It began on Novem-

ber 23, 1961, when I found him in his house with a dislocated ankle. He explained that he had an enemy, a sorceress who could turn into a blackbird and who had attempted to kill him.

"As soon as I can walk I'm going to show you who the woman is," don Juan said. "You must know who she is."

"Why does she want to kill you?"

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently and refused to say anything else.

I came back to see him ten days later and found him perfectly well. He rotated his ankle to demonstrate to me that it was fine and attributed his prompt recovery to the nature of the cast he himself had made.

"It's good you're here," he said. "Today I'm going to take you on a little journey."

He then directed me to drive to a desolate area. We stopped there; don Juan stretched his legs and made himself comfortable on the seat, as if he were going to take a nap. He told me to relax and remain very quiet; he said we had to be as inconspicuous as possible until nightfall because the late afternoon was a very dangerous time for the business we were pursuing.

"What kind of business are we pursuing?" I asked.

"We are here to stake out la Catalina," he said.

When it was fairly dark we slid out of the car and walked very slowly and noiselessly into the desert chaparral.

From the place where we stopped I could distinguish the black silhouette of the hills on both sides. We were in a flat, fairly wide canyon. Don Juan gave me detailed instructions on how to stay merged with the chaparral and taught me a way to sit "in virgil," as he called it. He told me to tuck my right leg under my left thigh and keep my left leg in a squat position. He explained that the tucked leg was used as a spring

in order to stand up with great speed, if it were necessary. He then told me to sit facing the west, because that was the direction of the woman's house. He sat next to me, to my right, and told me in a whisper to keep my eyes focused on the ground, searching, or rather, waiting, for a sort of wind wave that would make a ripple in the bushes. Whenever the ripple touched the bushes on which I had focused my gaze, I was supposed to look up and see the sorceress in all her "magnificent evil splendor." Don Juan actually used those words. When I asked him to explain what he meant, he said that if I detected a ripple I simply had to look up and see for myself, because "a sorcerer in flight" was such a unique sight that it defied explanations.

There was a fairly steady wind and I thought I detected a ripple in the bushes many times. I looked up each time, prepared to have a transcendental experience, but I did not see anything. Every time the wind blew the bushes don Juan would kick the ground vigorously, whirling around, moving his arms as if they were whips. The strength of his movements was extraordinary.

After a few failures to see the sorceress "in flight" I was sure I was not going to witness any transcendental event, yet don Juan's display of "power" was so exquisite that I did not mind spending the night there.

At daybreak don Juan sat down by me. He seemed to be totally exhausted. He could hardly move. He lay down on his back and mumbled that he had failed to "pierce the woman." I was very intrigued by that statement; he repeated it several times and each time his tone became more downhearted, more desperate. I began to experience an unusual anxiety. I found it very easy to project my feelings into don Juan's mood.

Don Juan did not mention anything about the incident or the woman for several months. I thought he had either for-

gotten or resolved the whole affair. One day, however, I found him in a very agitated mood, and in a manner that was completely incongruous with his natural calmness he told me that the "blackbird" had stood in front of him the night before, almost touching him, and that he had not even awakened. The woman's artfulness was so great that he had not felt her presence at all. He said his good fortune was to wake up in the nick of time to stage a horrendous fight for his life. Don Juan's tone of voice was moving, almost pathetic. I felt an overwhelming surge of compassion and concern.

In a somber and dramatic tone he reaffirmed that he had no way to stop her and that the next time she came near him was going to be his last day on earth. I became despondent and was nearly in tears. Don Juan seemed to notice my profound concern and laughed, I thought, bravely. He patted me on the back and said that I should not worry, that he was not altogether lost yet, because he had one last card, a trump card.

"A warrior lives strategically," he said, smiling. "A warrior never carries loads he cannot handle."

Don Juan's smile had the power to dispel the ominous clouds of doom. I suddenly felt elated and we both laughed. He patted my head.

"You know, of all the things on this earth, you are my last card," he said abruptly, looking straight into my eyes.

"What?"

"You are my trump card in my fight against that witch."

I did not understand what he meant and he explained that the women did not know me and that if I played my hand as he would direct me, I had a better than good chance to "pierce her."

"What do you mean by 'pierce her'?"

"You cannot kill her but you must pierce her like a balloon. If you do that she'll leave me alone. But don't think about it now. I'll tell you what to do when the time comes."

Months went by. I had forgotten the incident and was caught by surprise when I arrived at his house one day; don Juan came out running and did not let me get out of my car.

"You must leave immediately," he whispered with appalling urgency. "Listen carefully. Buy a shotgun, or get one in any way you can; don't bring me your own gun, do you understand? Get any gun, except your own, and bring it here right away."

"Why do you want a shotgun?"

"Go now!"

I returned with a shotgun. I had not had enough money to buy one but a friend of mine had given me his old gun. Don Juan did not look at it; he explained, laughing, that he had been abrupt with me because the blackbird was on the roof of the house and he did not want her to see me.

"Finding the blackbird on the roof gave me the idea that you could bring a gun and pierce her with it," don Juan said emphatically. "I don't want anything to happen to you, so I suggested that you buy the gun or that you get one in any other way. You see, you have to destroy the gun after completing the task."

"What kind of task are you talking about?"

"You must attempt to pierce the woman with your shotgun."

He made me clean the gun by rubbing it with the fresh leaves and stems of a peculiarly scented plant. He himself rubbed two shells and placed them inside the barrels. Then he said I was to hide in front of his house and wait until the blackbird landed on the roof and then, after taking careful aim, I was supposed to let go with both barrels. The effect of the surprise, more than the pellets, would pierce the woman, and if I were powerful and determined I could force her to leave him alone. Thus my aim had to be impeccable and so did my determination to pierce her.

"You must scream at the moment you shoot," he said. "It must be a potent and piercing yell."

He then piled bundles of bamboo and fire sticks about ten feet away from the *ramada* of his house. He made me lean against the piles. The position was quite comfortable. I was sort of half-seated; my back was well propped and I had a good view of the roof.

He said it was too early for the witch to be out, and that we had until dusk to do all the preparations; he would then pretend he was locking himself inside the house, in order to attract her and elicit another attack on his person. He told me to relax and find a comfortable position that I could shoot from without moving. He made me aim at the roof a couple of times and concluded that the act of lifting the gun to my shoulder and taking aim was too slow and cumbersome. He then built a prop for the gun. He made two deep holes with a pointed iron bar, planted two forked sticks in them, and tied a long pole in between the forks. The structure gave me a shooting support and allowed me to keep the gun aimed at the roof.

Don Juan looked at the sky and said it was time for him to go into the house. He got up and calmly went inside, giving me the final admonition that my endeavor was not a joke and that I had to hit the bird with the first shot.

After don Juan left I had a few more minutes of twilight and then it became quite dark. It seemed as if darkness had been waiting until I was alone and suddenly it descended on me. I tried to focus my eyes on the roof, which was silhouetted against the sky; for a while there was enough light on the horizon so the line of the roof was still visible, but then the sky became black and I could hardly see the house. I kept my eyes focused on the roof for hours without noticing anything at all. I saw a couple of owls flying by toward the

north; the span of their wings was quite remarkable and they could not be mistaken for blackbirds. At a given moment, however, I distinctly noticed the black shape of a small bird landing on the roof. It was definitely a bird! My heart began pounding hard; I felt a buzzing in my ears. I aimed in the dark and pulled both triggers. There was quite a loud explosion. I felt a strong recoil of the gun butt on my shoulder and at the same time I heard a most piercing and horrendous human shriek. It was loud and eerie and seemed to have come from the roof. I had a moment of total confusion. I then remembered that don Juan had admonished me to yell as I shot and I had forgotten to do so. I was thinking of reloading my gun when don Juan opened the door and came out running. He had his kerosene lantern with him. He appeared to be quite nervous.

"I think you got her," he said. "We must find the dead bird now."

He brought a ladder and made me climb up and look on the *ramada*, but I could not find anything there. He climbed up and looked himself for a while, with equally negative results.

"Perhaps you have blasted the bird to bits," don Juan said, "in which case we must find at least a feather."

We began looking around the *ramada* first and then around the house. We looked with the light of the lantern until morning. Then we started looking again all over the area we had covered during the night. Around 11:00 A.M. don Juan called off our search. He sat down dejected, smiled sheepishly at me, and said that I had failed to stop his enemy and that now, more than ever before, his life was not worth a hoot because the woman was doubtlessly irked, itching to take revenge.

"You're safe, though," don Juan said reassuringly. "The woman doesn't know you."

As I was walking to my car to return home, I asked him if I had to destroy the shotgun. He said the gun had done nothing and I should give it back to its owner. I noticed a profound look of despair in don Juan's eyes. I felt so moved by it that I was about to weep.

"What can I do to help you?" I asked.

"There's nothing you can do," don Juan said.

We remained silent for a moment. I wanted to leave right away. I felt an oppressive anguish. I was ill at ease.

"Would you really try to help me?" don Juan asked in a childlike tone.

I told him again that my total person was at his disposal, that my affection for him was so profound I would undertake any kind of action to help him.

Don Juan smiled and asked again if I really meant that, and I vehemently reaffirmed my desire to help him.

"If you really mean it," he said, "I may have one more chance."

He seemed to be delighted. He smiled broadly and clapped his hands several times, the way he always does when he wants to express a feeling of pleasure. This change of mood was so remarkable that it also involved me. I suddenly felt that the oppressive mood, the anguish, had been vanquished and life was inexplicably exciting again. Don Juan sat down and I did likewise. He looked at me for a long moment and then proceeded to tell me in a very calm and deliberate manner that I was in fact the only person who could help him at that moment, and thus he was going to ask me to do something very dangerous and very special.

He paused for a moment as if he wanted a reaffirmation on my part, and I again reiterated my firm desire to do anything for him.

"I'm going to give you a weapon to pierce her," he said.

He took a long object from his pouch and handed it to me. I took it and then examined it. I almost dropped it.

"It is a wild boar," he went on. "You must pierce her with it."

The object I was holding was a dry foreleg of a wild boar. The skin was ugly and the bristles were revolting to the touch. The hoof was intact and its two halves were spread out, as if the leg were stretched. It was an awful-looking thing. It made me feel almost sick to my stomach. He quickly took it back.

"You must ram the wild boar right into her navel," don Juan said.

"What?" I said in a feeble voice.

"You must hold the wild boar in your left hand and stab her with it. She is a sorceress and the wild boar will enter her belly and no one in this world, except another sorcerer, will see it stuck in there. This is not an ordinary battle but an affair of sorcerers. The danger you will run is that if you fail to pierce her she might strike you dead on the spot, or her companions and relatives will shoot you or knife you. You may, on the other hand, get out without a scratch.

"If you succeed she will have a hellish time with the wild boar in her body and she will leave me alone."

An oppressive anguish enveloped me again. I had a profound affection for don Juan. I admired him. At the time of this startling request, I had already learned to regard his way of life and his knowledge as a paramount accomplishment. How could anyone let a man like that die? And yet how could anyone deliberately risk his life? I became so immersed in my deliberations I did not notice that don Juan had stood up and was standing by me until he patted me on the shoulder. I looked up; he was smiling benevolently.

"Whenever you feel that you really want to help me, you

should return," he said, "but not until then. If you come back I know what we will have to do. Go now! If you don't want to return I'll understand that too."

I automatically stood up, got into my car, and drove away. Don Juan had actually let me off the hook. I could have left and never returned, but somehow the thought of being free to leave did not soothe me. I drove a while longer and then impulsively turned around and drove back to don Juan's house.

He was still sitting underneath his *ramada* and did not seem surprised to see me.

"Sit down," he said. "The clouds in the west are beautiful. It will be dark shortly. Sit quietly and let the twilight fill you. Do whatever you want now, but when I tell you, look straight at those shiny clouds and ask the twilight to give you power and calmness."

I sat facing the western clouds for a couple of hours. Don Juan went into the house and stayed inside. When it was getting dark he returned.

"The twilight has come," he said. "Stand up! Don't close your eyes, but look straight at the clouds; put your arms up with your hands open and your fingers extended and trot in place."

I followed his instructions; I lifted my arms over my head and began trotting. Don Juan came to my side and corrected my movements. He placed the leg of the wild boar against the palm of my left hand and made me hold it with my thumb. He then pulled my arms down until they pointed to the orange and dark gray clouds over the horizon, toward the west. He extended my fingers like fans and told me not to curl them over the palms of my hands. It was of crucial importance that I keep my fingers spread because if I closed them I would not be asking the twilight for power and calm,

but would be menacing it. He also corrected my trotting. He said it should be peaceful and uniform, as if I were actually running toward the twilight with my extended arms.

I could not fall asleep during that night. It was as if, instead of calming me, the twilight had agitated me into a frenzy.

"I still have so many things pending in my life," I said. "So many things unresolved."

Don Juan chuckled softly.

"Nothing is pending in the world," he said. "Nothing is finished, yet nothing is unresolved. Go to sleep."

Don Juan's words were strangely soothing.

Around ten o'clock the next morning, don Juan gave me something to eat and then we were on our way. He whispered that we were going to approach the woman around noon, or before noon if possible. He said that the ideal time would have been the early hours of the day, because a witch is always less powerful or less aware in the morning, but she would never leave the protection of her house at those hours. I did not ask any questions. He directed me to the highway and at a certain point he told me to stop and park on the side of the road. He said we had to wait there.

I looked at my watch; it was five minutes to eleven. I yawned repeatedly. I was actually sleepy; my mind wandered around aimlessly.

Suddenly don Juan straightened up and nudged me. I jumped up in my seat.

"There she is!" he said.

I saw a woman walking toward the highway on the edge of a cultivated field. She was carrying a basket looped in her right arm. It was not until then that I noticed we were parked near a crossroads. There were two narrow trails which ran parallel to both sides of the highway and another wider and

more trafficked trail that ran perpendicular to the highway; obviously people who used that trail had to walk across the paved road.

When the woman was still on the dirt road don Juan told me to get out of the car.

"Do it now," he said firmly.

I obeyed him. The woman was almost on the highway. I ran and overtook her. I was so close to her that I felt her clothes on my face. I took the wild boar hoof from under my shirt and thrust it at her. I did not feel any resistance to the blunt object I had in my hand. I saw a fleeting shadow in front of me, like a drape; my head turned to my right and I saw the woman standing fifty feet away on the opposite side of the road. She was a fairly young, dark woman with a strong, stocky body. She was smiling at me. Her teeth were white and big and her smile was placid. She had closed her eyes halfway, as if to protect them from the wind. She was still holding her basket, looped over her right arm.

I then had a moment of unique confusion. I turned around to look at don Juan. He was making frantic gestures to call me back. I ran back. There were three or four men coming in a hurry toward me. I got into my car and sped away in the opposite direction.

I tried to ask don Juan what had happened but I could not talk; my ears were bursting with an overwhelming pressure; I felt that I was choking. He seemed to be pleased and began to laugh. It was as if my failure did not concern him. I had my hands so tight around the steering wheel that I could not move them; they were frozen; my arms were rigid and so were my legs. In fact I could not take my foot off the gas pedal.

Don Juan patted me on the back and told me to relax. Little by little the pressure in my ears diminished.

"What happened back there?" I finally asked.

He giggled like a child without answering. Then he asked me if I had noticed the way the woman got out of the way. He praised her excellent speed. Don Juan's talk seemed so incongruous that I could not really follow him. He praised the woman! He said her power was impeccable and she was a relentless enemy.

I asked don Juan if he did not mind my failure. I was truly surprised and annoyed at his change of mood. He seemed to be actually glad.

He told me to stop. I parked alongside the road. He put his hand on my shoulder and looked piercingly into my eyes.

"Whatever I have done to you today was a trick," he said bluntly. "The rule is that a man of knowledge has to trap his apprentice. Today I have trapped you and I have tricked you into learning."

I was dumfounded. I could not arrange my thoughts. Don Juan explained that the whole involvement with the woman was a trap; that she had never been a threat to him; and that his job was to put me in touch with her, under the specific conditions of abandon and power I had experienced when I tried to pierce her. He commended my resolution and called it an act of power which demonstrated to the woman that I was capable of great exertion. Don Juan said that even though I was not aware of it, all I did was to show off in front of her.

"You could never touch her," he said, "but you showed your claws to her. She knows now that you're not afraid. You have challenged her. I used her to trick you because she's powerful and relentless and never forgets. Men are usually too busy to be relentless enemies."

I felt a terrible anger. I told him that one should not play with a person's innermost feelings and loyalties.

Don Juan laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks, and

I hated him. I had an overwhelming desire to punch him and leave; there was, however, such a strange rhythm in his laughter that it kept me almost paralyzed.

"Don't be so angry," don Juan said soothingly.

Then he said that his acts had never been a farce, that he also had thrown his life away a long time before when his own benefactor tricked him, just as he had tricked me. Don Juan said that his benefactor was a cruel man who did not think about him the way he, don Juan, thought about me. He added very sternly that the woman had tested her strength against him and had really tried to kill him.

"Now she knows that I was playing with her," he said, laughing, "and she'll hate *you* for it. She can't do anything to me, but she will take it out on you. She doesn't know yet how much power you have, so she will come to test you, little by little. Now you have no choice but to learn in order to defend yourself, or you will fall prey to that lady. She is no trick."

Don Juan reminded me of the way she had flown away.

"Don't be angry," he said. "It was not an ordinary trick. It was the rule."

There was something about the way the woman moved away from me that was truly maddening. I had witnessed it myself: she had jumped the width of the highway in a flick of an eyelash. I had no way to get out of that certainty. From that moment on I focused all my attention on that incident and little by little I accumulated "proof" that she was actually following me. The final outcome was that I had to withdraw from the apprenticeship under the pressure of my irrational fear.

I came back to don Juan's house hours later, in the early afternoon. He was apparently waiting for me. He came up to

me as I got out of my car and examined me with curious eyes, walking around me a couple of times.

"Why the nervousness?" he asked before I had time to say anything.

I explained that something had scared me off that morning and that I had begun to feel something prowling around me, as in the past. Don Juan sat down and seemed to be engulfed in thoughts. His face had an unusually serious expression. He seemed to be tired. I sat by him and arranged my notes.

After a very long pause his face brightened up and he smiled.

"What you felt this morning was the spirit of the water hole," he said. "I've told you that you must be prepared for unexpected encounters with those forces. I thought you understood."

"I did."

"Then why the fear?"

I could not answer.

"That spirit is on your trail," he said. "It already tapped you in the water. I assure you it will tap you again and probably you won't be prepared and that encounter will be your end."

Don Juan's words made me feel genuinely concerned. My feelings were strange, however; I was concerned but not afraid. Whatever was happening to me had not been able to elicit my old feelings of blind fear.

"What should I do?" I asked.

"You forget too easily," he said. "The path of knowledge is a forced one. In order to learn we must be spurred. In the path of knowledge we are always fighting something, avoiding something, prepared for something; and that something is always inexplicable, greater, more powerful than us. The inexplicable forces will come to you. Now it is the spirit of the

water hole, later on it'll be your own ally, so there is nothing you can do now but to prepare yourself for the struggle. Years ago la Catalina spurred you, she was only a sorceress, though, and that was a beginner's trick.

"The world is indeed full of frightening things and we are helpless creatures surrounded by forces that are inexplicable and unbending. The average man, in ignorance, believes that those forces can be explained or changed; he doesn't really know how to do that, but he expects that the actions of mankind will explain them or change them sooner or later. The sorcerer, on the other hand, does not think of explaining or changing them; instead, he learns to use such forces by redirecting himself and adapting to their direction. That's his trick. There is very little to sorcery once you find out its trick. A sorcerer is only slightly better off than the average man. Sorcery does not help him to live a better life; in fact I should say that sorcery hinders him; it makes his life cumbersome, precarious. By opening himself to knowledge a sorcerer becomes more vulnerable than the average man. On the one hand his fellow men hate him and fear him and will strive to end his life; on the other hand the inexplicable and unbending forces that surround every one of us, by right of our being alive, are for a sorcerer a source of even greater danger. To be pierced by a fellow man is indeed painful, but nothing in comparison to being touched by an ally. A sorcerer, by opening himself to knowledge falls prey to such forces and has only one means of balancing himself, his will; thus he must feel and act like a warrior. I will repeat this once more: Only as a warrior can one survive the path of knowledge. What helps a sorcerer live a better life is the strength of being a warrior.

"It is my commitment to teach you to *see*. Not because I personally want to do so but because you were chosen; you were pointed out to me by Mescalito. I am compelled by my

personal desire, however, to teach you to feel and act like a warrior. I personally believe that to be a warrior is more suitable than anything else. Therefore I have endeavored to show you those forces as a sorcerer perceives them, because only under their terrifying impact can one become a warrior. To *see* without first being a warrior would make you weak; it would give you a false meekness, a desire to retreat; your body would decay because you would become indifferent. It is my personal commitment to make you a warrior so you won't crumble.

"I have heard you say time and time again that you are always prepared to die. I don't regard that feeling as necessary. I think it is a useless indulgence. A warrior should be prepared only to battle. I have also heard you say that your parents injured your spirit. I think the spirit of man is something that can be injured very easily, although not by the same acts you yourself call injurious. I believe that your parents did injure you by making you indulgent and soft and given to dwelling.

"The spirit of a warrior is not geared to indulging and complaining, nor is it geared to winning or losing. The spirit of a warrior is geared only to struggle, and every struggle is a warrior's last battle on earth. Thus the outcome matters very little to him. In his last battle on earth a warrior lets his spirit flow free and clear. And as he wages his battle, knowing that his will is impeccable, a warrior laughs and laughs."

I finished writing and looked up. Don Juan was staring at me. He shook his head from side to side and smiled.

"You really write everything?" he asked in an incredulous tone. "Genaro says that he can never be serious with you because you're always writing. He's right; how can anyone be serious if you're always writing?"

He chuckled and I tried to defend my position.

"It doesn't matter," he said, "If you ever learn to *see*, I suppose you must do it your own weird way."

He stood up and looked at the sky. It was around noon. He said there was still time to start on a hunting trip to a place in the mountains.

"What are we going to hunt?" I asked.

"A special animal, either a deer or a wild boar or even a mountain lion."

He paused for a moment and then added, "Even an eagle."

I stood up and followed him to my car. He said that this time we were going only to observe and to find out what animal we had to hunt. He was about to get in my car when he seemed to remember something. He smiled and said that the journey had to be postponed until I had learned something without which our hunting would be impossible.

We went back and sat down again underneath his *ramada*. There were so many things I wanted to ask, but he did not give me time to say anything before he spoke again.

"This brings us to the last point you must know about a warrior," he said. "A warrior selects the items that make his world.

"The other day when you saw the ally and I had to wash you twice, do you know what was wrong with you?"

"No."

"You had lost your shields."

"What shields? What are you talking about?"

"I said that a warrior selects the items that make his world. He selects deliberately, for every item he chooses is a shield that protects him from the onslaughts of the forces he is striving to use. A warrior would use his shields to protect himself from his ally, for instance.

"An average man who is equally surrounded by those inexplicable forces is oblivious to them because he has other kinds of special shields to protect himself."

He paused and looked at me with a question in his eyes. I had not understood what he meant.

"What are those shields?" I insisted.

"What people do," he repeated.

"What do they do?"

"Well, look around. People are busy doing that which people do. Those are their shields. Whenever a sorcerer has an encounter with any of those inexplicable and unbending forces we have talked about, his gap opens, making him more susceptible to his death than he ordinarily is; I've told you that we die through that gap, therefore if it is open one should have his will ready to fill it; that is, if one is a warrior. If one is not a warrior, like yourself, then one has no other recourse but to use the activities of daily life to take one's mind away from the fright of the encounter and thus to allow one's gap to close. You got angry with me that day when you met the ally. I made you angry when I stopped your car and I made you cold when I dumped you into the water. Having your clothes on made you even colder. Being angry and cold helped you close your gap and you were protected. At this time in your life, however, you can no longer use those shields as effectively as an average man. You know too much about those forces and now you are finally at the brink of feeling and acting as a warrior. Your old shields are no longer safe."

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Act like a warrior and select the items of your world. You cannot surround yourself with things helter-skelter any longer. I tell you this in a most serious vein. Now for the first time you are not safe in your old way of life."

"What do you mean by selecting the items of my world?"

"A warrior encounters those inexplicable and unbending forces because he is deliberately seeking them, thus he is always prepared for the encounter. You, on the other hand, are never prepared for it. In fact if those forces come to you they

will take you by surprise; the fright will open your gap and your life will irresistibly escape through it. The first thing you must do, then, is be prepared. Think that the ally is going to pop in front of your eyes any minute and you must be ready for him. To meet an ally is no party or Sunday picnic and a warrior takes the responsibility of protecting his life. Then if any of those forces tap you and open your gap, you must deliberately strive to close it by yourself. For that purpose you must have a selected number of things that give you great peace and pleasure, things which you can deliberately use to take your thoughts from your fright and close your gap and make you solid."

"What kind of things?"

"Years ago I told you that in his day-to-day life a warrior chooses to follow the path with heart. It is the consistent choice of the path with heart which makes a warrior different from the average man. He knows that a path has heart when he is one with it, when he experiences a great peace and pleasure traversing its length. The things a warrior selects to make his shields are the items of a path with heart."

"But you said I'm not a warrior, so how can I choose a path with heart?"

"This is your turning point. Let's say that before you did not really need to live like a warrior. Now it is different, now you must surround yourself with the items of a path with heart and you must refuse the rest, or you will perish in the next encounter. I may add that you don't need to ask for the encounter any longer. An ally can now come to you in your sleep; while you are talking to your friends; while you are writing."

"For years I have truly tried to live in accordance with your teachings," I said. "Obviously I have not done well. How can I do better now?"

"You think and talk too much. You must stop talking to yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"You talk to yourself too much. You're not unique at that. Every one of us does that. We carry on an internal talk. Think about it. Whenever you are alone, what do you do?"

"I talk to myself."

"What do you talk to yourself about?"

"I don't know; anything, I suppose."

"I'll tell you what we talk to ourselves about. We talk about our world. In fact we maintain our world with our internal talk."

"How do we do that?"

"Whenever we finish talking to ourselves the world is always as it should be. We renew it, we kindle it with life, we uphold it with our internal talk. Not only that, but we also choose our paths as we talk to ourselves. Thus we repeat the same choices over and over until the day we die, because we keep on repeating the same internal talk over and over until the day we die.

"A warrior is aware of this and strives to stop his talking. This is the last point you have to know if you want to live like a warrior."

"How can I stop talking to myself?"

"First of all you must use your ears to take some of the burden from your eyes. We have been using our eyes to judge the world since the time we were born. We talk to others and to ourselves mainly about what we see. A warrior is aware of that and listens to the world; he listens to the sounds of the world."

I put my notes away. Don Juan laughed and said that he did not mean I should force the issue, that listening to the

sounds of the world had to be done harmoniously and with great patience.

"A warrior is aware that the world will change as soon as he stops talking to himself," he said, "and he must be prepared for that monumental jolt."

"What do you mean, don Juan?"

"The world is such-and-such or so-and-so only because we tell ourselves that that is the way it is. If we stop telling ourselves that the world is so-and-so, the world will stop being so-and-so. At this moment I don't think you're ready for such a momentous blow, therefore you must start slowly to undo the world."

"I really do not understand you!"

"Your problem is that you confuse the world with what people do. Again you're not unique at that. Every one of us does that. The things people do are the shields against the forces that surround us; what we do as people gives us comfort and makes us feel safe; what people do is rightfully very important, but only as a shield. We never learn that the things we do as people are only shields and we let them dominate and topple our lives. In fact I could say that for mankind, what people do is greater and more important than the world itself."

"What do you call the world?"

"The world is all that is encased here," he said, and stomped the ground. "Life, death, people, the allies, and everything else that surrounds us. The world is incomprehensible. We won't ever understand it; we won't ever unravel its secrets. Thus we must treat it as it is, a sheer mystery!

"An average man doesn't do this, though. The world is never a mystery for him, and when he arrives at old age he is convinced he has nothing more to live for. An old man has not exhausted the world. He has exhausted only what people

do. But in his stupid confusion he believes that the world has no more mysteries for him. What a wretched price to pay for our shields!

"A warrior is aware of this confusion and learns to treat things properly. The things that people do cannot under any conditions be more important than the world. And thus a warrior treats the world as an endless mystery and what people do as an endless folly."

15

I began the exercise of listening to the "sounds of the world" and kept at it for two months, as don Juan had specified. It was excruciating at first to listen and not look, but even more excruciating was not to talk to myself. By the end of the two months I was capable of shutting off my internal dialogue for short periods of time and I was also capable of paying attention to sounds.

I arrived at don Juan's house at 9 A.M. on November 10, 1969.

"We should start that trip right now," he said upon my arrival at his house.

I rested for an hour and then we drove toward the low slopes of the mountains to the east. We left my car in the care of one of his friends who lived in that area while we hiked into the mountains. Don Juan had put some crackers and sweet rolls in a knapsack for me. There were enough provisions for a day or two. I had asked don Juan if we needed more. He shook his head negatively.

We walked the entire morning. It was a rather warm day. I carried one canteen of water, most of which I drank myself. Don Juan drank only twice. When there was no more water

he assured me it was all right to drink from the streams we found on our way. He laughed at my reluctance. After a short while my thirst made me overcome my fears.

In the early afternoon we stopped in a small valley at the bottom of some lush green hills. Behind the hills, toward the east, the high mountains were silhouetted against a cloudy sky.

"You can think, you can write about what we say or about what you perceive, but nothing about where we are," he said.

We rested for a while and then he took a bundle from inside his shirt. He untied it and showed me his pipe. He filled its bowl with smoking mixture, lighted a match and kindled a small dry twig, placed the burning twig inside the bowl, and told me to smoke. Without a piece of charcoal inside the bowl it was difficult to light the pipe; we had to keep kindling twigs until the mixture caught on fire.

When I had finished smoking he said that we were there so I could find out the kind of game I was supposed to hunt. He carefully repeated three or four times that the most important aspect of my endeavor was to find some holes. He emphasized the word "holes" and said that inside them a sorcerer could find all sorts of messages and directions.

I wanted to ask what kind of holes they were; don Juan seemed to have guessed my question and said that they were impossible to describe and were in the realm of "seeing." He repeated at various times that I should focus all my attention on listening to sounds and do my best to find the holes between the sounds. He said that he was going to play his spirit catcher four times. I was supposed to use those eerie calls as a guide to the ally that had welcomed me; that ally would then give me the message I was seeking. Don Juan told me I should stay in complete alertness, since he had no idea how the ally would manifest himself to me.

I listened attentively. I was sitting with my back against the

rock side of the hill. I experienced a mild numbness. Don Juan warned me against closing my eyes. I began to listen and I could distinguish the whistling of birds, the wind rustling the leaves, the buzzing of insects. As I placed my undivided attention on those sounds, I could actually make out four different types of birds whistlings. I could distinguish the speeds of the wind, in terms of slow or fast; I could also hear the different rustlings of three types of leaves. The buzzings of insects were dazzling. There were so many that I could not count them or correctly differentiate them.

I was immersed in a strange world of sound, as I had never been in my life. I began to slide to my right. Don Juan made a motion to stop me but I caught myself before he did. I straightened up and sat erect again. Don Juan moved my body until he had propped me on a crevice in the rock wall. He swept the small rocks from under my legs and placed the back of my head against the rock.

He told me imperatively to look at the mountains to the southeast. I fixed my gaze in the distance but he corrected me and said I should not gaze but look, sort of scanning, at the hills in front of me and at the vegetation on them. He repeated over and over that I should concentrate all my attention on my hearing.

Sounds began to be prominent again. It was not so much that I wanted to hear them; rather, they had a way of forcing me to concentrate on them. The wind rustled the leaves. The wind came high above the trees and then it dropped into the valley where we were. Upon dropping, it touched the leaves of the tall trees first; they made a peculiar sound which I fancied to be a sort of rich, raspy, lush sound. Then the wind hit the bushes and their leaves sounded like a crowd of small things; it was an almost melodious sound, very engulfing and quite demanding; it seemed capable of drowning every-

thing else. I found it displeasing. I felt embarrassed because it occurred to me that I was like the rustle of the bushes, nagging and demanding. The sound was so akin to me that I hated it. Then I heard the wind rolling on the ground. It was not a rustling sound but more of a whistle, almost a beep or a flat buzz. Listening to the sounds the wind was making, I realized that all three of them happened at once. I was wondering how I had been capable of isolating each of them, when I again became aware of the whistling of birds and the buzzing of insects. At one moment there were only the sounds of the wind and the next moment a gigantic flow of other sounds emerged at once into my field of awareness. Logically, all the existing sounds must have been continually emitted during the time I was hearing only the wind.

I could not count all the whistles of birds or buzzings of insects, yet I was convinced I was listening to each separate sound as it was produced. Together they created a most extraordinary order. I cannot call it any other thing but "order." It was an order of sounds that had a pattern; that is, every sound happened in sequence.

Then I heard a unique prolonged wail. It made me shiver. Every other noise ceased for an instant, and the valley was dead still as the reverberation of the wail reached the valley's outer limits; then the noises began again. I picked up their pattern immediately. After a moment of attentive listening I thought I understood don Juan's recommendation to watch for the holes between the sounds. The pattern of noises had spaces in between sounds! For example, specific whistles of birds were timed and had pauses in between them, and so had all the other sounds I was perceiving. The rustling of leaves was like a binding glue that made them into a homogeneous buzz. The fact of the matter was that the timing of each sound was a unit in the overall pattern of sounds. Thus the spaces

or pauses in between sounds were, if I paid attention to them, holes in a structure.

I heard again the piercing wail of don Juan's spirit catcher. It did not jolt me, but the sounds again ceased for an instant and I perceived such a cessation as a hole, a very large hole. At that precise moment I shifted my attention from hearing to looking. I was looking at a cluster of low hills with lush green vegetation. The silhouette of the hills was arranged in such a way that from the place where I was looking there seemed to be a hole on the side of one of the hills. It was a space in between two hills and through it I could see the deep, dark, gray hue of the mountains in the distance. For a moment I did not know what it was. It was as if the hole I was looking at was the "hole" in the sound. Then the noises began again but the visual image of the huge hole remained. A short while later I became even more keenly aware of the pattern of sounds and their order and the arrangement of their pauses. My mind was capable of distinguishing and discriminating among an enormous number of individual sounds. I could actually keep track of all the sounds, thus each pause between sounds was a definite hole. At a given moment the pauses became crystallized in my mind and formed a sort of solid grid, a structure. I was not seeing or hearing it. I was feeling it with some unknown part of myself.

Don Juan played his string once again; the sounds ceased as they had done before, creating a huge hole in the sound structure. This time, however, that big pause blended with the hole in the hills I was looking at; they became superimposed on each other. The effect of perceiving the two holes lasted for such a long time that I was capable of seeing-hearing their contours as they fit one another. Then the other sounds began again and their structure of pauses became an extraordinary, almost visual perception. I began seeing the sounds as

they created patterns and then all those patterns became superimposed on the environment in the same way I had perceived the two big holes becoming superimposed. I was not looking or hearing as I was accustomed to doing. I was doing something which was entirely different but combined features of both. For some reason my attention was focused on the large hole in the hills. I felt I was hearing it and at the same time looking at it. There was something of a lure about it. It dominated my field of perception and every single sound pattern which coincided with a feature of the environment was hinged on that hole.

I heard once more the eerie wail of don Juan's spirit catcher; all other sounds stopped; the two large holes seemed to light up and next I was looking again at the plowed field; the ally was standing there as I had seen him before. The light of the total scene became very clear. I could see him plainly, as if he were fifty yards away. I could not see his face; his hat covered it. Then he began to come toward me, lifting up his head slowly as he walked; I could almost see his face and that terrified me. I knew I had to stop him without delay. I had a strange surge in my body; I felt an outflow of "power." I wanted to move my head to the side to stop the vision but I could not do it. At that crucial instant a thought came to my mind. I knew what don Juan meant when he spoke of the items of a "path with heart" being the shields. There was something I wanted to do in my life, something very consuming and intriguing, something that filled me with great peace and joy. I knew the ally could not overcome me. I moved my head away without any trouble before I could see his entire face.

I began hearing all the other sounds; they suddenly became very loud and shrill, as if they were actually angry with me. They lost their patterns and turned into an amorphous con-

glomerate of sharp, painful shrieks. My ears began to buzz under their pressure. I felt that my head was about to explode. I stood up and put the palms of my hands to my ears.

Don Juan helped me walk to a very small stream, made me take off my clothes, and rolled me in the water. He made me lie on the almost dry bed of the stream and then gathered water in his hat and splashed me with it.

The pressure in my ears subsided very rapidly and it took only a few minutes to "wash" me. Don Juan looked at me, shook his head in approval, and said I had made myself "solid" in no time at all.

I put on my clothes and he took me back to the place where I had been sitting. I felt extremely vigorous, buoyant, and clearheaded.

He wanted to know all the details of my vision. He said that the "holes" in the sounds were used by sorcerers to find out specific things. A sorcerer's ally would reveal complicated affairs through the holes in the sounds. He refused to be more specific about the "holes" and sloughed off my questions, saying that since I did not have an ally such information would only be harmful to me.

"Everything is meaningful for a sorcerer," he said. "The sounds have holes in them and so does everything around you. Ordinarily a man does not have the speed to catch the holes, and thus he goes through life without protection. The worms, the birds, the trees, all of them can tell us unimaginable things if only one could have the speed to grasp their message. The smoke can give us that grasping speed. But we must be in good terms with all the living things of this world. This is the reason why we must talk to plants we are about to kill and apologize for hurting them; the same thing must be done with the animals we are going to hunt. We should take only enough for our needs, otherwise the plants and the animals and the

worms we have killed would turn against us and cause us disease and misfortune. A warrior is aware of this and strives to appease them, so when he peers through the holes, the trees and birds and the worms give him truthful messages.

"But all this is not important now. What is important is that you saw the ally. That is your game! I've told you that we were going to hunt for something. I thought it was going to be an animal. I figured that you were going to see the animal we had to hunt. I myself saw a wild boar; my spirit catcher is a wild boar."

"Do you mean your spirit catcher is made out of a wild boar?"

"No! Nothing in the life of a sorcerer is made out of anything else. If something is anything at all, it is the thing itself. If you knew wild boars you would realize my spirit catcher is one."

"Why did we come here to hunt?"

"The ally showed you a spirit catcher that he got from his pouch. You need to have one if you are going to call him."

"What is a spirit catcher?"

"It is a fiber. With it I can call the allies, or my own ally, or I can call the spirits of water holes, the spirits of rivers, the spirits of mountains. Mine is a wild boar and cries like a wild boar. I used it twice around you to call the spirit of the water hole to help you. The spirit came to you as the ally came to you today. You could not see it, though, because you did not have the speed; however, that day I took you to the water canyon and put you on a rock, you knew the spirit was almost on top of you without actually seeing it. Those spirits are helpers. They are hard to handle and sort of dangerous. One needs an impeccable will to hold them at bay."

"What do they look like?"

"They are different for every man and so are the allies. For

you an ally would apparently look like a man you once knew, or like a man you will always be about to know; that's the bent of your nature. You are given to mysteries and secrets. I'm not like you, so an ally for me is something very precise.

"The spirits of water holes are proper to specific places. The one I called to help you is one I have known myself. It has helped me many times. Its abode is that canyon. At the time I called it to help you, you were not strong and the spirit took you hard. That was not its intention—they have none—but you were lying there very weak, weaker than I suspected. Later on the spirit nearly lured you to your death; in the water at the irrigation canal you were phosphorescent. The spirit took you by surprise and you nearly succumbed. Once a spirit does that, it always comes back for its prey. I'm sure it will come back for you. Unfortunately, you need the water to become solid again when you use the little smoke; that puts you at a terrible disadvantage. If you don't use the water you will probably die, but if you do use it, the spirit will take you."

"Can I use water at another place?"

"It doesn't make any difference. The spirit of the water hole around my house can follow you anywhere, unless you have a spirit catcher. That is why the ally showed it to you. He told you that you need one. He wrapped it around his left hand and came to you after pointing out the water canyon. Today he again wanted to show you the spirit catcher, as he did the first time you met him. It was wise of you to stop; the ally was going too fast for your strength and a direct jolt with him would be very injurious to you."

"How can I get a spirit catcher now?"

"Apparently the ally is going to give you one himself."

"How?"

"I don't know. You will have to go to him. He has already told you where to look for it."

"Where?"

"Up there, on those hills where you saw the hole."

"Would I be looking for the ally himself?"

"No. But he is already welcoming you. The little smoke has opened your way to him. Then, later on, you will meet him face to face, but that will happen only after you know him very well."

16

We arrived in the same valley in the late afternoon of December 15, 1969. Don Juan mentioned repeatedly as we moved through the shrubs that directions or points of orientation were of crucial importance in the endeavor I was going to undertake.

"You must determine the right direction immediately upon arriving at the top of a hill," don Juan said. "As soon as you are on the top, face that direction." He pointed to the southeast. "That is your good direction and you should always face it, especially when you're in trouble. Remember that."

We stopped at the bottom of the hills where I had perceived the hole. He pointed at a specific place where I had to sit down; he sat next to me and in a very quiet voice gave me detailed instructions. He said that as soon as I reached the hilltop I had to extend my right arm in front of me with the palm of my hand down and my fingers stretched like a fan, except the thumb, which had to be tucked against the palm. Next I had to turn my head to the north and fold my arm over my chest, pointing my hand also toward the north; then I had to dance, putting my left foot behind the right one, beating the ground with the tip of my left toes. He said that when I felt a warmth coming up my left leg I had to begin sweeping my

arm slowly from north to south and then to the north again.

"The spot over which the palm of your hand feels warm as you sweep your arm is the place where you must sit, and it is also the direction in which you must look," he said. "If the spot is toward the east, or if it is in that direction"—he pointed to the southeast again—"the results will be excellent. If the spot where your hand gets warm is toward the north, you will take a bad beating but you may turn the tide in your favor. If the spot is toward the south you will have a hard fight.

"You will need to sweep your arm up to four times at first, but as you become more familiar with the movement you will need only one single sweep to know whether or not your hand is going to get warm.

"Once you establish a spot where your hand gets warm, sit there; that is your first point. If you are facing the south or the north, you have to make up your mind whether you feel strong enough to stay. If you have doubts about yourself, get up and leave. There is no need to stay if you are not confident. If you decide to stick around, clean an area big enough to build a fire about five feet away from your first point. The fire must be in a straight line in the direction you are looking. The area where you build the fire is your second point. Then gather all the twigs you can in between those two points and make a fire. Sit on your first point and look at the fire. Sooner or later the spirit will come and you will see it.

"If your hand does not get warm at all after four sweeping movements, sweep your arm slowly from north to south and then turn around and sweep it to the west. If your hand gets warm on any place toward the west, drop everything and run. Run downhill toward the flat area, and no matter what you hear or feel behind you, don't turn around. As soon as you get to the flat area, no matter how frightened you are, don't keep

on running, drop to the ground, take off your jacket, bunch it around your navel, and curl up like a ball, tucking your knees against your stomach. You must also cover your eyes with your hands, and your arms have to remain tight against your thighs. You must stay in that position until morning. If you follow these simple steps no harm will ever come to you.

"In case you cannot get to the flat area in time, drop to the ground right where you are. You will have a horrid time there. You will be harassed, but if you keep calm and don't move or look you will come out of it without a single scratch.

"Now if your hand does not get warm at all while you sweep it to the west, face the east again and run in an easterly direction until you are out of breath. Stop there and repeat the same maneuvers. You must keep on running toward the east, repeating these movements, until your hand gets warm."

After giving me these instructions he made me repeat them until I had memorized them. Then we sat in silence for a long time. I attempted to revive the conversation a couple of times, but he forced me into silence each time by an imperative gesture.

It was getting dark when don Juan got up and without a word began climbing the hill. I followed him. At the top of the hill I performed all the movements he had prescribed. Don Juan stood by, a short distance away, and kept a sharp look on me. I was very careful and deliberately slow. I tried to feel any perceivable change of temperature, but I could not detect whether or not the palm of my hand became warm. By that time it was fairly dark, yet I was still capable of running in an easterly direction without stumbling on the shrubs. I stopped running when I was out of breath, which was not too far from my point of departure. I was extremely tired and tense. My forearms ached and so did my calves.

I repeated there all the required motions and again had the

same negative results. I ran in the dark two more times, and then, while I was sweeping my arm for the third time, my hand became warm over a point toward the east. It was such a definite change of temperature that it startled me. I sat down and waited for don Juan. I told him I had detected a change in temperature in my hand. He told me to proceed, and I picked all the dry brush I could find and started a fire. He sat to my left a couple of feet away.

The fire drew strange, dancing silhouettes. At times the flames became iridescent; they grew bluish and then brilliantly white. I explained that unusual play of colors by assuming that it was produced by some chemical property of the specific dry twigs and branches I had collected. Another very unusual feature of the fire was the sparks. The new twigs I kept adding created extremely big sparks. I thought they were like tennis balls that seemed to explode in midair.

I stared at the fire fixedly, the way I believed don Juan had recommended, and I became dizzy. He handed me his water gourd and signaled me to drink. The water relaxed me and gave me a delightful feeling of freshness.

Don Juan leaned over and whispered in my ear that I did not have to stare at the flames, that I should only watch in the direction of the fire. I became very cold and clammy after watching for almost an hour. At a moment when I was about to lean over and pick up a twig, something like a moth or a spot in my retina swept across from right to left between myself and the fire. I immediately recoiled. I looked at don Juan and he signaled me with a movement of his chin to look back at the flames. A moment later the same shadow swept across in the opposite direction.

Don Juan got up hurriedly and began piling loose dirt on top of the burning twigs until he had completely extinguished the flames. He executed the maneuver of putting out the fire

with tremendous speed. By the time I moved to help him he had finished. He stomped on the dirt on top of the smoldering twigs and then he nearly dragged me downhill and out of the valley. He walked very fast without turning his head back and did not allow me to talk at all.

When we got to my car hours later I asked him what was the thing I had seen. He shook his head imperatively and we drove in complete silence.

He went directly inside when we arrived at his house in the early morning, and he again hushed me up when I tried to talk.

Don Juan was sitting outside, behind his house. He seemed to have been waiting for me to wake up, because he started talking as I came out of the house. He said that the shadow I had seen the night before was a spirit, a force that belonged to the particular place where I had seen it. He spoke of that specific being as a useless one.

"It only exists there," he said. "It has no secrets of power, so there was no point in remaining there. You would have seen only a fast, passing shadow going back and forth all night. There are other types of beings, however, that can give you secrets of power, if you are fortunate enough to find them."

We ate some breakfast then and did not talk for quite a while. After eating we sat in front of his house.

"There are three kinds of beings," he said suddenly, "those that cannot give anything because they have nothing to give, those that can only cause fright, and those that have gifts. The one you saw last night was a silent one; it has nothing to give; it is only a shadow. Most of the time, however, another type of being is associated with the silent one, a nasty spirit whose only quality is to cause fear and which always hovers around

the abode of a silent one. That is why I decided to get out of there fast. That nasty type follows people right into their homes and makes life impossible for them. I know people who have had to move out of their houses because of them. There are always some people who believe they can get a lot out of that kind of being, but the mere fact that a spirit is around the house does not mean anything. People may try to entice it, or they may follow it around the house under the impression that it can reveal secrets to them. But the only thing people would get is a frightful experience. I know people who took turns watching one of those nasty beings that had followed them into their house. They watched the spirit for months; finally someone else had to step in and drag the people out of the house; they had become weak and were wasting away. So the only wise thing one can do with that nasty type is to forget about it and leave it alone."

I asked him how people enticed a spirit. He said that people took pains to figure out first where the spirit would most likely appear and then they put weapons in its way, in hopes that it might touch the weapons, because spirits were known to like paraphernalia of war. Don Juan said that any kind of gear, or any object, that was touched by a spirit rightfully became a power object. However, the nasty type of being was known never to touch anything, but only to produce the auditory illusion of noise.

I then asked don Juan about the manner in which those spirits caused fear. He said that their most common way of frightening people was to appear as a dark shadow shaped as a man that would roam around the house, creating a frightening clatter or creating the sound of voices, or as a dark shadow that would suddenly lurch out from a dark corner.

Don Juan said that the third type of spirit was a true ally, a giver of secrets; that special type existed in lonely, aban-

doned places, places which were almost inaccessible. He said that a man who wished to find one of these beings had to travel far and go by himself. At a distant and lonely place the man had to take all the necessary steps alone. He had to sit by his fire and if he saw the shadow he had to leave immediately. He had to remain, however, if he encountered other conditions, such as a strong wind that would kill his fire and would keep him from kindling it again during four attempts; or if a branch broke from a nearby tree. The branch really had to break and the man had to make sure that it was not merely the sound of a branch breaking off.

Other conditions he had to be aware of were rocks that rolled, or pebbles which were thrown at his fire, or any constant noise, and he then had to walk in the direction in which any of these phenomena occurred until the spirit revealed itself.

There were many ways in which such a being put a warrior to the test. It might suddenly leap in front of him, in the most horrendous appearance, or it might grab the man from the back and not turn him loose and keep him pinned down for hours. It might also topple a tree on him. Don Juan said that those were truly dangerous forces, and although they could not kill a man hand to hand, they could cause his death by fright, or by actually letting objects fall on him, or by appearing suddenly and causing him to stumble, lose his footing, and go over a precipice.

He told me that if I ever found one of those beings under inappropriate circumstances I should never attempt to struggle with it because it would kill me. It would rob my soul. So I should throw myself to the ground and bear it until the morning.

"When a man is facing the ally, the giver of secrets, he has to muster up all his courage and grab it before it grabs him, or chase it before it chases him. The chase must be relentless

and then comes the struggle. The man must wrestle the spirit to the ground and keep it there until it gives him power."

I asked him if these forces had substance, if one could really touch them. I said that the very idea of a "spirit" connoted something ethereal to me.

"Don't call them spirits," he said. "Call them allies; call them inexplicable forces."

He was silent for a while, then he lay on his back and propped his head on his folded arms. I insisted on knowing if those beings had substance.

"You're damn right they have substance," he said after another moment of silence. "When one struggles with them they are solid, but that feeling lasts only a moment. Those beings rely on a man's fear; therefore if the man struggling with one of them is a warrior, the being loses its tension very quickly while the man becomes more vigorous. One can actually absorb the spirit's tension."

"What kind of tension is that?" I asked.

"Power. When one touches them, they vibrate as if they were ready to rip one apart. But that is only a show. The tension ends when the man maintains his grip."

"What happens when they lose their tension? Do they become like air?"

"No, they just become flaccid. They still have substance, though. But it is not like anything one has ever touched."

Later on, during the evening, I said to him that perhaps what I had seen the night before could have been only a moth. He laughed and very patiently explained that moths fly back and forth only around light bulbs, because a light bulb cannot burn their wings. A fire, on the other hand, would burn them the first time they came close to it. He also pointed out that the shadow covered the entire fire. When he mentioned

that, I remembered that it was really an extremely large shadow and that it actually blocked the view of the fire for an instant. However, it had happened so fast that I had not emphasized it in my earlier recollection.

Then he pointed out that the sparks were very large and flew to my left. I had noticed that myself. I said that the wind was probably blowing in that direction. Don Juan replied that there was no wind whatsoever. That was true. Upon recalling my experience I could remember that the night was still.

Another thing I had completely overlooked was a greenish glow in the flames, which I detected when don Juan signaled me to keep on looking at the fire, after the shadow had first crossed my field of vision. Don Juan reminded me of it. He also objected to my calling it a shadow. He said it was round and more like a bubble.

Two days later, on December 17, 1969, don Juan said in a very casual tone that I knew all the details and necessary techniques in order to go to the hills by myself and obtain a power object, the spirit catcher. He urged me to proceed alone and affirmed that his company would only hinder me.

I was ready to leave when he seemed to change his mind.

"You're not strong enough," he said. "I'll go with you to the bottom of the hills."

When we were at the small valley where I had seen the ally, he examined from a distance the formation in the terrain that I had called a hole in the hills, and said that we had to go still further south into the distant mountains. The abode of the ally was at the further most point we could see through the hole.

I looked at the formation and all I could distinguish was

the bluish mass of the distant mountains. He guided me, however, in a southeasterly direction and after hours of walking we reached a point he said was "deep enough" into the ally's abode.

It was late afternoon when we stopped. We sat down on some rocks. I was tired and hungry; all I had eaten during the day was some tortillas and water. Don Juan stood up all of a sudden, looked at the sky, and told me in a commanding tone to take off in the direction that was the best for me and to be sure I could remember the spot where we were at the moment, so I could return there whenever I was through. He said in a reassuring tone that he would be waiting for me if it took me forever.

I asked apprehensively if he believed that the affair of getting a spirit catcher was going to take a long time.

"Who knows?" he said, smiling mysteriously.

I walked away toward the southeast, turning around a couple of times to look at don Juan. He was walking very slowly in the opposite direction. I climbed to the top of a large hill and looked at don Juan once again; he was a good two hundred yards away. He did not turn to look at me. I ran downhill into a small bowl-like depression between the hills, and I suddenly found myself alone. I sat down for a moment and began to wonder what I was doing there. I felt ludicrous looking for a spirit catcher. I ran back up to the top of the hill to have a better view of don Juan but I could not see him anywhere. I ran downhill in the direction I had last seen him. I wanted to call off the whole affair and go home. I felt quite stupid and tired.

"Don Juan!" I yelled over and over.

He was nowhere in sight. I again ran to the top of another steep hill; I could not see him from there either. I ran quite a way looking for him but he had disappeared. I retraced my

steps and went back to the original place where he had left me. I had the absurd certainty I was going to find him sitting there laughing at my inconsistencies.

"What in the hell have I gotten into?" I said loudly.

I knew then that there was no way to stop whatever I was doing there. I really did not know how to go back to my car. Don Juan had changed directions various times and the general orientation of the four cardinal points was not enough. I was afraid of getting lost in the mountains. I sat down and for the first time in my life I had the strange feeling that there never really was a way to revert back to an original point of departure. Don Juan had said that I always insisted on starting at a point I called the beginning, when in effect the beginning did not exist. And there in the middle of those mountains I felt I understood what he meant. It was as if the point of departure had always been myself; it was as if don Juan had never really been there; and when I looked for him he became what he really was—a fleeting image that vanished over a hill.

I heard the soft rustle of leaves and a strange fragrance enveloped me. I felt the wind as a pressure on my ears, like a shy buzzing. The sun was about to reach some compact clouds over the horizon that looked like a solidly tinted orange band, when it disappeared behind a heavy blanket of lower clouds; it appeared again a moment later, like a crimson ball floating in the mist. It seemed to struggle for a while to get into a patch of blue sky but it was as if the clouds would not give the sun time, and then the orange band and the dark silhouette of the mountains seemed to swallow it up.

I lay down on my back. The world around me was so still, so serene and at the same time so alien, I felt overwhelmed. I did not want to weep but tears rolled down easily.

I remained in that position for hours. I was almost unable to get up. The rocks under me were hard, and right where

I had lain down there was scarcely any vegetation, in contrast to the lush green bushes all around. From where I was I could see a fringe of tall trees on the eastern hills.

Finally it got fairly dark. I felt better; in fact I felt almost happy. For me the semidarkness was much more nurturing and protective than the hard daylight.

I stood up, climbed to the top of a small hill, and began repeating the motions don Juan had taught me. I ran toward the east seven times, and then I noticed a change of temperature on my hand. I built a fire and set a careful watch, as don Juan had recommended, observing every detail. Hours went by and I began to feel very tired and cold. I had gathered quite a pile of dry twigs; I fed the fire and moved closer to it. The vigil was so strenuous and so intense that it exhausted me; I began to nod. I fell asleep twice and woke up only when my head bobbed to one side. I was so sleepy that I could not watch the fire any more. I drank some water and even sprinkled some on my face to keep awake. I succeeded in fighting my sleepiness only for brief moments. I had somehow become despondent and irritable; I felt utterly stupid being there and that gave me a sensation of irrational frustration and dejection. I was tired, hungry, sleepy, and absurdly annoyed with myself. I finally gave up the struggle of keeping awake. I added a lot of dry twigs to the fire and lay down to sleep. The pursuit of an ally and a spirit catcher was at that moment a most ludicrous and foreign endeavor. I was so sleepy that I could not even think or talk to myself. I fell asleep.

I was awakened suddenly by a loud crack. It appeared that the noise, whatever it was, had come from just above my left ear, since I was lying on my right side. I sat up fully awake. My left ear buzzed and was deafened by the proximity and force of the sound.

I must have been asleep for only a short while, judging by

the amount of dry twigs which were still burning in the fire. I did not hear any other noises but I remained alert and kept on feeding the fire.

The thought crossed my mind that perhaps what woke me up was a gunshot; perhaps someone was around watching me, taking shots at me. The thought became very anguishing and created an avalanche of rational fears. I was sure that someone owned that land, and if that was so they might take me for a thief and kill me, or they might kill me to rob me, not knowing that I had nothing with me. I experienced a moment of terrible concern for my safety. I felt the tension in my shoulders and my neck. I moved my head up and down; the bones of my neck made a cracking sound. I still kept looking into the fire but I did not see anything unusual in it, nor did I hear any more noises.

After a while I relaxed quite a bit and it occurred to me that perhaps don Juan was at the bottom of all this. I rapidly became convinced that it was so. The thought made me laugh. I had another avalanche of rational conclusions, happy conclusions this time. I thought that don Juan must have suspected I was going to change my mind about staying in the mountains, or he must have seen me running after him and taken cover in a concealed cave or behind a bush. Then he had followed me and, noticing I had fallen asleep, waked me up by cracking a branch near my ear. I added more twigs to the fire and began to look around in a casual and covert manner to see if I could spot him, even though I knew that if he was hiding around there I would not be able to discover him.

Everything was quite placid: the crickets, the wind roughing the trees on the slopes of the hills surrounding me, the soft, cracking sound of the twigs catching on fire. Sparks flew around, but they were only ordinary sparks.

Suddenly I heard the loud noise of a branch snapping in two. The sound came from my left. I held my breath as I listened with utmost concentration. An instant later I heard another branch snapping on my right.

Then I heard the faint, faraway sound of snapping branches. It was as if someone was stepping on them and making them crack. The sounds were rich and full, they had a lusty quality. They also seemed to be getting closer to where I was. I had a very slow reaction and did not know whether to listen or stand up. I was deliberating what to do when all of a sudden the sound of snapping branches happened all around me. I was engulfed by them so fast that I barely had time to jump to my feet and stomp on the fire.

I began to run downhill in the darkness. The thought crossed my mind as I moved through the shrubs that there was no flat land. I kept on trotting and trying to protect my eyes from the bushes. I was halfway down to the bottom of the hill when I felt something behind me, almost touching me. It was not a branch; it was something which I intuitively felt was overtaking me. This realization made me freeze. I took off my jacket, bundled it on my stomach, crouched over my legs, and covered my eyes with my hands, as don Juan had prescribed. I kept that position for a short while and then I realized that everything around me was dead still. There were no sounds of any kind. I became extraordinarily alarmed. The muscles of my stomach contracted and shivered spasmodically. Then I heard another cracking sound. It seemed to have occurred far away, but it was extremely clear and distinct. It happened once more, closer to me. There was an interval of quietness and then something exploded just above my head. The suddenness of the noise made me jump involuntarily and I nearly rolled over on my side. It was definitely the sound of a branch being snapped in two. The sound had hap-

pened so close that I heard the rustling of the branch leaves as it was being cracked.

Next there was a downpour of cracking explosions; branches were being snapped with great force all around me. The incongruous thing, at that point, was my reaction to the whole phenomenon; instead of being terrified, I was laughing. I sincerely thought I had hit upon the cause of all that was happening. I was convinced that don Juan was again tricking me. A series of logical conclusions cemented my confidence; I felt elated. I was sure I could catch that foxy old don Juan in another of his tricks. He was around me cracking branches, and knowing I would not dare to look up, he was safe and free to do anything he wanted to. I figured that he had to be alone in the mountains, since I had been with him constantly for days. He had not had the time or the opportunity to engage any collaborators. If he was hiding, as I thought, he was hiding by himself, and logically he could produce only a limited number of noises. Since he was alone, the noises had to occur in a linear temporal sequence; that is, one at a time, or at most two or three at a time. Besides, the variety of noises also had to be limited to the mechanics of a single individual. I was absolutely certain, as I remained crouched and still, that the whole experience was a game and that the only way to remain on top of it was by emotionally dislodging myself from it. I was positively enjoying it. I caught myself chuckling at the idea that I could anticipate my opponent's next move. I tried to imagine what I would do next if I were don Juan.

The sound of something slurping jolted me out of my mental exercise. I listened attentively; the sound happened again. I could not determine what it was. It sounded like an animal slurping water. It happened again very close by. It was an irritating sound that brought to mind the smacking

noise of a big-jawed adolescent girl chewing gum. I was wondering how don Juan could produce such a noise when the sound happened again, coming from the right. There was a single sound first and then I heard a series of slushing, slurping sounds, as if someone were walking in mud. It was an almost sensual, exasperating sound of feet slushing in deep mud. The noises stopped for a moment and started once more toward my left, very close, perhaps only ten feet away. Now they sounded as if a heavy person were trotting with rain boots in mud. I marveled at the richness of the sound. I could not imagine any primitive devices that I myself could use to produce it. I heard another series of trotting, slushing sounds toward my rear and then they happened all at once, on all sides. Someone seemed to be walking, running, trotting on mud all around me.

A logical doubt occurred to me. If don Juan was doing all that, he had to be running in circles at an incredible speed. The rapidity of the sounds made that alternative impossible. I then thought that don Juan must have confederates after all. I wanted to involve myself in speculation as to who his accomplices could be but the intensity of the noises took all my concentration. I really could not think clearly, yet I was not afraid, I was perhaps only dumbfounded by the strange quality of the sounds. The slushings actually vibrated. In fact their peculiar vibrations seemed to be directed at my stomach, or perhaps I perceived their vibrations with the lower part of my abdomen.

That realization brought an instantaneous loss of my sense of objectivity and aloofness. The sounds were attacking my stomach! The question occurred to me, "What if it was not don Juan?" I panicked. I tensed my abdominal muscles and tucked my thighs hard against the bundle of my jacket.

The noises increased in number and speed, as if they knew

I had lost my confidence, their vibrations were so intense I wanted to vomit. I fought the feeling of nausea. I took deep breaths and began to sing my peyote songs. I got sick and the slushing noises ceased at once; the sounds of crickets and wind and the distant staccato barking of coyotes became superimposed. The abrupt cessation allowed me a respite and I took stock of myself. Only a short while before I had been in the best of spirits, confident and aloof; obviously I had failed miserably to judge the situation. Even if don Juan had accomplices, it would be mechanically impossible for them to produce sounds that would affect my stomach. To produce sounds of such intensity they would have needed gadgetry beyond their means or their conception. Apparently the phenomenon I was experiencing was not a game and the "another one of don Juan's tricks" theory was only my rude explanation.

I had cramps and an overwhelming desire to roll over and straighten my legs. I decided to move to my right in order to get my face off the place where I had gotten sick. The instant I began to crawl I heard a very soft squeak right above my left ear. I froze on the spot. The squeak was repeated on the other side of my head. It was a single sound. I thought it resembled the squeak of a door. I waited but I heard nothing else, so I decided to move again. No sooner had I started to inch my head to the right when I was nearly forced to jump up. A flood of squeaks engulfed me at once. They were like squeaks of doors at times; at other times they were like the squeaks of rats or guinea pigs. They were not loud or intense but very soft and insidious and produced agonizing spasms of nausea in me. They stopped as they had begun, diminishing gradually until I could hear only one or two of them at a time.

Then I heard something like the wings of a big bird sweep-

ing over the tops of the bushes. It seemed to be flying in circles over my head. The soft squeaks began to increase again, and so did the flapping wings. Above my head there seemed to be something like a flock of gigantic birds beating their soft wings. Both noises merged, creating an enveloping wave around me. I felt that I was floating suspended in an enormous undulating ripple. The squeaks and the flapping were so smooth I could feel them all over my body. The flapping wings of a flock of birds seemed to be pulling me up from above, while the squeaks of an army of rats seemed to be pushing me from underneath and from around my body.

There was no doubt in my mind that through my blundering stupidity I had unleashed something terrible on myself. I clenched my teeth and took deep breaths and sang peyote songs.

The noises lasted a very long time and I opposed them with all my might. When they subsided, there was again an interrupted "silence" as I am accustomed to perceiving silence; that is, I could detect only the natural sounds of the insects and the wind. The time of silence was for me more deleterious than the time of noises. I began to think and to assess my position, and my deliberation threw me into a panic. I knew that I was lost; I did not have the knowledge nor the stamina to fend off whatever was accosting me. I was utterly helpless, crouched over my own vomit. I thought that the end of my life had come and I began to weep. I wanted to think about my life but I did not know where to start. Nothing of what I had done in my life was really worthy of that last ultimate emphasis, so I had nothing to think about. That was an exquisite realization. I had changed since the last time I experienced a similar fright. This time I was more empty. I had less personal feelings to carry along.

I asked myself what a warrior would do in that situation

and I arrived at various conclusions. There was something about my umbilical region that was uniquely important; there was something unearthly about the sounds; they were aiming at my stomach; and the idea that don Juan was tricking me was utterly untenable.

The muscles of my stomach were very tight, although I did not have cramps any longer. I kept on singing and breathing deeply and I felt a soothing warmth inundating my entire body. It had become clear to me that if I was going to survive I had to proceed in terms of don Juan's teachings. I repeated his instructions in my mind. I remembered the exact point where the sun had disappeared over the mountains in relation to the hill where I was and to the place where I had crouched. I reoriented myself and when I was convinced that my assessment of the cardinal points was correct I began to change my position, so I would have my head pointing in a new and "better" direction, the southeast. I slowly started moving my feet toward my left, inch by inch, until I had them twisted under my calves. Then I began to align my body with my feet, but no sooner had I begun to creep laterally then I felt a peculiar tap; I had the actual physical sensation of something touching the uncovered area of the back of my neck. It happened so fast that I yelled involuntarily and froze again. I tightened my abdominal muscles and began to breathe deeply and sing my peyote songs. A second later I felt once more the same light tap on my neck. I cringed. My neck was uncovered and there was nothing I could do to protect myself. I was tapped again. It was a very soft, almost silky object that touched my neck, like the furry paw of a giant rabbit. It touched me again and then it began to cross my neck back and forth until I was in tears. It was as if a herd of silent, smooth, weightless kangaroos were stepping on my neck. I could hear the soft thump of their

paws as they stepped gently over me. It was not a painful sensation at all and yet it was maddening. I knew that if I did not involve myself in doing something I would go mad and stand up and run. So I slowly began again to maneuver my body into a new position. My attempt at moving seemed to increase the tapping on my neck. It finally got to such a frenzy that I jerked my body and at once aligned it in the new direction. I had no idea whatsoever about the outcome of my act. I was just taking action to keep from going stark, raving mad.

As soon as I changed directions the tapping on my neck ceased. After a long, anguished pause I heard a distant snapping of branches. The noises were not close any more. It was as if they had retreated to another position far away from me. The sound of snapping branches merged after a moment with a blasting sound of leaves being rustled, as if a strong wind were beating the entire hill. All the bushes around me seemed to shiver, yet there was no wind. The rustling sound and the cracking of branches gave me the feeling that the whole hill was on fire. My body was as tight as a rock. I was perspiring copiously. I began to feel warmer and warmer. For a moment I was utterly convinced that the hill was burning. I did not jump up and run because I was so numb I was paralyzed; in fact I could not even open my eyes. All that mattered to me at that point was to get up and escape the fire. I had terrible cramps in my stomach which started to cut my intake of air. I became very involved in trying to breathe. After a long struggle I was capable of taking deep breaths again and I was also capable of noticing that the rustling had subsided; there was only an occasional cracking sound. The snapping sound of branches became more and more distant and sporadic until it ceased altogether.

I was able to open my eyes. I looked through my half-closed

lids to the ground underneath me. It was already daylight. I waited a while longer without moving and then I started to stretch my body. I rolled on my back. The sun was over the hills in the east.

It took me hours to straighten out my legs and drag myself downhill. I began to walk toward the place where don Juan had left me, which was perhaps only a mile away; by mid-afternoon I was barely at the edge of some woods, still a good quarter of a mile away.

I could not walk any more, not for any reason. I thought of mountain lions and tried to climb up a tree, but my arms could not support my weight. I leaned against a rock and resigned myself to die there. I was convinced that I would be food for mountain lions or other predators. I did not have the strength even to throw a rock. I was not hungry or thirsty. Around noon I had found a small stream and had drunk a lot of water, but the water did not help to restore my strength. As I sat there in utter helplessness I felt more despondent than afraid. I was so tired I did not care about my fate and I fell asleep.

I woke up when something shook me. Don Juan was leaning over me. He helped me sit up and gave me water and some gruel. He laughed and said that I looked wretched. I tried to tell him what had happened but he hushed me up and said that I had missed my mark, that the place where I was supposed to meet him was about a hundred yards away. Then he half carried me downhill. He said he was taking me to a large stream and was going to wash me there. On the way he plugged my ears with some leaves he had in his pouch and then he blindfolded me, putting one leaf on each eye and securing them both with a piece of cloth. He made me take off my clothes and told me to place my hands over my eyes and ears to make sure I could not see or hear anything.

Don Juan rubbed my entire body with leaves and then dumped me in a river. I felt it was a large river. It was deep. I was standing and I could not touch the bottom. Don Juan was holding me by the right elbow. At first I did not feel the coldness of the water, but little by little I began to feel chilled, and then the cold became intolerable. Don Juan pulled me out and dried me with some leaves that had a peculiar scent. I put on my clothes and he led me away; we walked a good distance before he took the leaves off my ears and my eyes. Don Juan asked me if I felt strong enough to walk back to my car. The weird thing was that I felt very strong. I even ran up the side of a steep hill to prove it.

On the way to my car I stayed very close to don Juan. I stumbled scores of times and he laughed. I noticed that his laughter was especially invigorating and it became the focal point of my replenishing; the more he laughed the better I felt.

The next day I narrated to don Juan the sequence of events from the time he left me. He laughed all the way through my account, especially when I told him that I had thought it was one of his tricks.

"You always think you're being tricked," he said. "You trust yourself too much. You act like you know all the answers. You know nothing, my little friend, nothing."

This was the first time don Juan had called me "my little friend." It took me aback. He noticed it and smiled. There was a great warmth in his voice and that made me very sad. I told him that I had been careless and incompetent because that was the inherent bent of my personality; and that I would never understand his world. I felt deeply moved. He was very encouraging and asserted that I had done fine.

I asked him the meaning of my experience.

"It has no meaning," he replied. "The same thing could happen to anyone, especially someone like you who has his gap already opened. It is very common. Any warrior who's gone in search of allies would tell you about their doings. What they did to you was mild. However, your gap is open and that is why you're so nervous. One cannot turn into a warrior overnight. Now you must go home and don't return until you're healed and your gap is closed."

17

I did not return to Mexico for months; I used the time to work my field notes and for the first time in ten years, since I started the apprenticeship, don Juan's teachings began to make real sense. I felt that the long periods of time I had to stay away from the apprenticeship had had a very sobering and beneficial effect on me; they had allowed me the opportunity to review my findings and to arrange them in an intellectual order proper of my training and interest. The events that took place on my last visit to the field, however, pointed to a fallacy in my optimism about understanding don Juan's knowledge.

I made the last entry in my field notes on October 16, 1970. The events that took place on that occasion marked a transition. They not only closed a cycle of instruction, but they also opened a new one, which was so very different from what I had done thus far that I feel this is the point where I must end my reportage.

As I approached don Juan's house I saw him sitting in his usual place under his *ramada* in front of the door. I parked in the shade of a tree, took my briefcase and a bag of groceries out of the car and walked toward him, greeting him in a loud voice. I then noticed that he was not alone. There was an-

other man sitting behind a high pile of firewood. Both of them were looking at me. Don Juan waved and so did the other man. Judging from his attire he was not an Indian but a Mexican from the Southwest. He was wearing Levis, a beige shirt, a Texan cowboy hat and cowboy boots.

I talked to don Juan and then looked at the man; he was smiling at me. I stared at him for a moment.

"Here's little Carlos," the man said to don Juan, "and he doesn't speak to me any more. Don't tell me that he's cross with me!"

Before I could say anything they both broke up laughing and only then did I realize that the strange man was don Genaro.

"You didn't recognize me, did you?" he asked, still laughing.

I had to admit that his attire had baffled me.

"What are you doing in this part of the world, don Genaro?" I asked.

"He came to enjoy the hot wind," don Juan said. "Isn't that right?"

"That's right," don Genaro echoed. "You've no idea what the hot wind can do to an old body like mine."

I sat down between them.

"What does it do to your body?" I asked.

"The hot wind tells extraordinarily things to my body," he said.

He turned to don Juan, his eyes glittering.

"Isn't that so?"

Don Juan shook his head affirmatively.

I told them that the time of the hot Santa Ana winds was the worst part of the year for me, and that it was certainly strange that don Genaro would come to seek the hot wind while I was running away from it.

"Carlos can't stand the heat," don Juan said to don Genaro. "When it gets hot he becomes like a child and suffocates."

"Suffo what?"

"Suffo . . . cates."

"My goodness!" don Genaro said, feigning concern, and made a gesture of despair which was indescribably funny.

Don Juan explained to him next that I had been away for months because of an unfortunate incident with the allies.

"So, you've finally encountered an ally!" don Genaro said.

"I think I did," I said cautiously.

They laughed loudly. Don Genaro patted me on the back two or three times. It was a very light tapping which I interpreted as a friendly gesture of concern. He rested his hand on my shoulder as he looked at me, and I had a feeling of placid contentment, which lasted only an instant, for next don Genaro did something inexplicable to me. I suddenly felt that he had put the weight of a boulder on my back. I had the sensation that he had increased the weight of his hand, which was resting on my right shoulder, until it made me sag all the way down and I hit my head on the ground.

"We must help little Carlos," don Genaro said and gave a conspiratorial look to don Juan.

I sat up straight again and turned to don Juan, but he looked away. I had a moment of vacillation and the annoying thought that don Juan was acting as if he were aloof, detached from me. Don Genaro was laughing; he seemed to be waiting for my reaction.

I asked him to put his hand on my shoulder once more, but he did not want to do it. I urged him at least to tell me what he had done to me. He chuckled. I turned to don Juan again and told him that the weight of don Genaro's hand had nearly crushed me.

"I don't know anything about it," don Juan said in a com-

ically factual tone. "He didn't put his hand on my shoulder."

With that both of them broke up laughing.

"What did you do to me, don Genaro?" I asked.

"I just put my hand on your shoulder," he said innocently.

"Do it again," I said.

He refused. Don Juan interceded at that point and asked me to describe to don Genaro what I had perceived in my last experience. I thought he wanted me to give a bona fide description of what had happened to me, but the more serious my description became the more they laughed. I stopped two or three times but they urged me to go on.

"The ally will come to you regardless of your feelings," don Juan said when I had finished my account. "I mean, you don't have to do anything to lure him out. You may be sitting twiddling your thumbs, or thinking about women and then suddenly, a tap on your shoulder, you turn around and the ally is standing by you."

"What can I do if something like that happens?" I asked.

"Hey! Hey! Wait a minute!" don Genaro said. "That's not a good question. You shouldn't ask what can you do, obviously you can't do anything. You should ask what can a warrior do?"

He turned to me, blinking. His head was slightly tilted to the right, and his mouth was puckered.

I looked at don Juan for a cue whether the situation was a joke, but he kept a solemn face.

"All right!" I said. "What can a warrior do?"

Don Genaro blinked and made smacking sounds with his lips, as if he were searching for a right word. He looked at me fixedly, holding his chin.

"A warrior wets his pants," he said with Indian solemnity.

Don Juan covered his face and don Genaro slapped the ground, exploding in a howling laughter.

"Fright is something one can never get over," don Juan said after the laughter had subsided. "When a warrior is caught in such a tight spot he would simply turn his back to the ally without thinking twice. A warrior cannot indulge, thus he cannot die of fright. A warrior allows the ally to come only when he is good and ready. When he is strong enough to grapple with the ally he opens his gap and lurches out, grabs the ally, keeps him pinned down and maintains his stare on him for exactly the time he has to, then he moves his eyes away and releases the ally and lets him go. A warrior, my little friend, is the master at all times."

"What happens if you stare at an ally for too long?" I asked.

Don Genaro looked at me and made a comical gesture of outstaring.

"Who knows?" don Juan said. "Maybe Genaro will tell you what happend to him."

"Maybe," don Genaro said and chuckled.

"Would you please tell me?"

Don Genaro got up, cracked his bones stretching his arms, and opened his eyes until they were round and looked crazy.

"Genaro is going to make the desert tremble," he said and went into the chaparral.

"Genaro is determined to help you," don Juan said in a confidential tone. "He did the same thing to you at his house and you almost *saw*."

I thought he was referring to what had happened at the waterfall, but he was talking about some unearthly rumbling sounds I had heard at don Genaro's house.

"By the way, what was it?" I asked. "We laughed at it, but you never explained to me what it was."

"You have never asked."

"I did."

"No. You have asked me about everything else except that."

Don Juan looked at me accusingly.

"That was Genaro's art," he said. "Only Genaro can do that. You almost *saw* then."

I told him that it had never occurred to me to associate "seeing" with the strange noises I had heard at that time.

"And why not?" he asked flatly.

"*Seeing* means the eyes to me," I said.

He scrutinized me for a moment as if there were something wrong with me.

"I never said that *seeing* is a matter of the eyes alone," he said and shook his head in disbelief.

"How does he do it?" I insisted.

"He has already told you how he does it," don Juan said sharply.

At that very moment I heard an extraordinary rumble.

I jumped up and don Juan began to laugh. The rumble was like a thunderous avalanche. Listening to it, I had the funny realization that my inventory of experiences in sound comes definitely from the movies. The deep thunder I heard resembled the sound track of a movie when the whole side of a mountain falls into a valley.

Don Juan held his sides as if they hurt from laughing. The thunderous rumble shook the ground where I stood. I distinctly heard the thump of what seemed to be a monumental boulder that was rolling on its sides. I heard a series of crushing thumps that gave me the impression that the boulder was rolling inexorably toward me. I experienced a moment of supreme confusion. My muscles were tense; my whole body was ready for fleeing.

I looked at don Juan. He was staring at me. I then heard the most frightening thump I had ever heard in my life. It

was as if a monumental boulder had landed right behind the house. Everything shook, and at that moment I had a most peculiar perception. For an instant I actually "saw" a boulder the size of a mountain right behind the house. It was not as if an image had been superimposed on the scenery of the house I was looking at. It was not the view of a real boulder either. It was rather as if the noise was creating the image of a boulder rolling on its monumental sides. I was actually "seeing" the noise. The inexplicable character of my perception threw me into the depths of despair and confusion. Never in my life would I have conceived that my senses were capable of perceiving in such a manner. I had an attack of rational fright and decided to flee for my life. Don Juan held me by the arm and ordered me imperatively not to run away and not to turn around either, but face the direction in which don Genaro had gone.

I heard next a series of booming noises, which resembled the sound of rocks falling and piling on top of each other, and then everything was quiet again. A few minutes later don Genaro came back and sat down. He asked me if I had "seen." I did not know what to say. I turned to don Juan for a cue. He was staring at me.

"I think he did," he said and chuckled.

I wanted to say that I did not know what they were talking about. I felt terribly frustrated. I had a physical sensation of wrath, of utter discomfort.

"I think we should leave him *here* to sit alone," don Juan said.

They got up and walked by me.

"Carlos is indulging in his confusion," don Juan said very loudly.

I stayed alone for hours and had time to write my notes

and to ponder on the absurdity of my experience. Upon thinking about it, it became obvious to me that from the very moment I saw don Genaro sitting under the *ramada* the situation had acquired a farcical mood. The more I deliberated about it the more convinced I became that don Juan had relinquished the control over to don Genaro and that thought filled me with apprehension.

Don Juan and don Genaro returned at dusk. They sat down next to me, flanking me. Don Genaro drew closer and almost leaned on me. His thin and frail shoulder touched me lightly and I experienced the same feeling I had had when he tapped me. A crushing weight toppled me over and I tumbled onto don Juan's lap. He helped me to sit up straight and asked in a joking tone if I was trying to sleep on his lap.

Don Genaro seemed to be delighted; his eyes shone. I wanted to weep. I had the feeling I was like an animal that had been corraled.

"Am I frightening you, little Carlos?" don Genaro asked and seemed really concerned. "You look like a wild horse."

"Tell him a story," don Juan said. "That's the only thing that calms him."

They moved away and sat in front of me. Both of them examined me with curiosity. In the semidarkness their eyes seemed glassy, like enormous dark pools of water. Their eyes were awesome. They were not the eyes of men. We stared at each other for a moment and then I moved my eyes away. I noticed that I was not afraid of them, and yet their eyes had frightened me to the point that I was shivering. I felt a most uncomfortable confusion.

After a moment of silence don Juan urged don Genaro to tell me what had happened to him at the time he had tried to outstare his ally. Don Genaro was sitting a few feet away, facing me; he did not say anything. I looked at him; his eyes

seemed to be four or five times the size of ordinary human eyes; they were shining and had a compelling attraction. What seemed to be the light of his eyes dominated everything around them. Don Genaro's body seemed to have shriveled and looked more like the body of a feline. I noticed a movement of his cat-like body and became frightened. In a completely automatic way, as if I had been doing it all my life, I adopted a "fighting form" and began beating rhythmically on my calf. When I became aware of my acts I got embarrassed and looked at don Juan. He was peering at me as he does ordinarily; his eyes were kind and soothing. He laughed loudly. Don Genaro made a purring sound and stood up and went inside the house.

Don Juan explained to me that don Genaro was very forceful and did not like to piddle around and that he had been just teasing me with his eyes. He said that, as usual, I knew more than I myself expected. He made a comment that everyone who was involved with sorcery was terribly dangerous during the hours of twilight and that sorcerers like don Genaro could perform marvels at that time.

We were quiet for a few minutes. I felt better. Talking to don Juan relaxed me and restored my confidence. Then he said that he was going to eat something and that we were going for a walk so that don Genaro could show me a technique for hiding.

I asked him to explain what he meant by a technique for hiding. He said he was through with explaining things to me because explaining only forced me to indulge.

We went inside the house. Don Genaro had lit the kerosene lantern and was chewing a mouthful of food.

After eating, the three of us walked into the thick desert chaparral. Don Juan walked almost next to me. Don Genaro was in front, a few yards ahead of us.

It was a clear night, there were heavy clouds, but enough moonlight to render the surroundings quite visible. At one moment don Juan stopped and told me to go ahead and follow don Genaro. I vacillated; he pushed me gently and assured me it was all right. He said I should always be ready and should always trust my own strength.

I followed don Genaro and for the next two hours I tried to catch up with him, but no matter how hard I struggled I could not overtake him. Don Genaro's silhouette was always ahead of me. Sometimes he disappeared as if he had jumped to the side of the trail only to appear again ahead of me. As far as I was concerned, this seemed to be a strange and meaningless walk in the dark. I followed because I did not know how to return to the house. I could not understand what don Genaro was doing. I thought he was leading me to some recondite place in the chaparral to show me the technique don Juan had talked about. At a certain point, however, I had the peculiar sensation that don Genaro was behind me. I turned around and caught a glimpse of a person some distance behind me. The effect was startling. I strained to see in the darkness and I believed I could make out the silhouette of a man standing perhaps fifteen yards away. The figure was almost merged with the bushes; it was as if he wanted to conceal himself. I stared fixedly for a moment and I could actually keep the silhouette of the man within my field of perception even through he was trying to hide behind the dark shapes of the bushes. Then a logical thought came to my mind. It occurred to me that the man had to be don Juan, who must have been following us all the time. The instant I became convinced that that was so, I also realized I could no longer isolate his silhouette; all I had in front of me was the undifferentiated dark mass of the desert chaparral.

I walked toward the place I had seen the man, but I could not find anybody. Don Genaro was nowhere in sight either,

and since I did not know my way I sat down to wait. A half hour later, don Juan and don Genaro came by. They called my name out loud. I stood up and joined them.

We walked to the house in complete silence. I welcomed that quiet interlude, for I felt completely disoriented. In fact, I felt unknown to myself. Don Genaro was doing something to me, something which kept me from formulating my thoughts the way I am accustomed to doing. This became evident to me when I sat down on the trail. I had automatically checked the time when I sat down and then I had remained quiet as if my mind had been turned off. Yet I sat in a state of alertness I have never experienced before. It was a state of thoughtlessness, perhaps comparable to not caring about anything. The world seemed to be, during that time, in a strange balance; there was nothing I could add to it and nothing I could subtract from it.

When we arrived at the house don Genaro rolled out a straw mat and went to sleep. I felt compelled to render my experiences of the day to don Juan. He did not let me talk.

October 18, 1970

"I think I understand what don Genaro was trying to do the other night," I said to don Juan.

I said that in order to draw him out. His continual refusal to talk was unnerving me.

Don Juan smiled and shook his head slowly as if agreeing with what I had said. I would have taken his gesture as an affirmation except for the strange glint in his eyes. It was as if his eyes were laughing at me.

"You don't think I understand, do you?" I asked compulsively.

"I suppose you do . . . you do, in fact. You do understand

that Genaro was behind you all the time. However, understanding is not the real point."

His statement that don Genaro had been behind me all the time was shocking to me. I begged him to explain it.

"Your mind is set to seek only one side of this," he said.

He took a dry twig and moved it in the air. He was not drawing in the air or making a figure; what he did resembled the movements he makes with his fingers when he cleans the debris from a pile of seeds. His movements were like a soft prodding or scratching the air with the twig.

He turned and looked at me and I shrugged my shoulders automatically in a gesture of bafflement. He drew closer and repeated his movements, making eight points on the ground. He circled the first point.

"You are here," he said. "We are all here; this is feeling, and we move from here to here."

He circled the second, which he had drawn right above number one. He then moved his twig back and forth between the two points to portray a heavy traffic.

"There are, however, six more points a man is capable of handling," he said. "Most men know nothing about them."

He placed his twig between points one and two and pecked on the ground with it.

"To move between these two points you call understanding. You've been doing that all your life. If you say you understand my knowledge, you have done nothing new."

He then joined some of the eight points to the others with lines; the result was a long trapezoid figure that had eight centers of uneven radiation.

"Each of these six remaining points is a world, just like feeling and understanding are two worlds for you," he said.

"Why eight points? Why not an infinite number, as in a circle?" I asked.

I drew a circle on the ground. Don Juan smiled.

"As far as I know there are only eight points a man is capable of handling. Perhaps men cannot go beyond that. And I said handling, not understanding, did you get that?"

His tone was so funny I laughed. He was imitating or rather mocking my insistence on the exact usage of words.

"Your problem is that you want to understand everything, and that is not possible. If you insist on understanding you're not considering your entire lot as a human being. Your stumbling block is intact. Therefore, you have done almost nothing in all these years. You have been shaken out of your total slumber, true, but that could have been accomplished anyway by other circumstances."

After a pause don Juan told me to get up because we were going to the water canyon. As we were getting into my car don Genaro came out from behind the house and joined us. I drove part of the way and then we walked into a deep ravine. Don Juan picked a place to rest in the shade of a large tree.

"You mentioned once," don Juan began, "that a friend of yours had said, when the two of you saw a leaf falling from the very top of a sycamore, that that same leaf will not fall again from that same sycamore ever in a whole eternity, remember?"

I remembered having told him about that incident.

"We are at the foot of a large tree," he continued, "and now if we look at that other tree in front of us we may see a leaf falling from the very top."

He signaled me to look. There was a large tree on the other side of the gully; its leaves were yellowish and dry. He urged me with a movement of his head to keep on looking at the tree. After a few minutes' wait, a leaf cracked loose from the top and began falling to the ground; it hit other leaves

and branches three times before it landed in the tall underbrush.

"Did you see it?"

"Yes."

"You would say that the same leaf will never again fall from that same tree, true?"

"True."

"To the best of your understanding that is true. But that is only to the best of your understanding. Look again."

I automatically looked and saw a leaf falling. It actually hit the same leaves and branches as the previous one. It was as if I were looking at an instant television replay. I followed the wavy falling of the leaf until it landed on the ground. I stood up to find out if there were two leaves, but the tall underbrush around the tree prevented me from seeing where the leaf had actually landed.

Don Juan laughed and told me to sit down.

"Look," he said, pointing with his head to the top of the tree. "There goes the same leaf again."

I once more saw a leaf falling in exactly the same pattern as the previous two.

When it had landed I knew don Juan was about to signal me again to look at the top of the tree, but before he did I looked up. The leaf was again falling. I realized then that I had only seen the first leaf cracking loose, or, rather, the first time the leaf fell I saw it from the instant it became detached from the branch; the other three times the leaf was already falling when I lifted my head to look.

I told that to don Juan and I urged him to explain what he was doing.

"I don't understand how you're making me see a repetition of what I had seen before. What did you do to me, don Juan?"

He laughed but did not answer and I insisted that he should

tell me how I could see that leaf falling over and over. I said that according to my reason that was impossible.

Don Juan said that his reason told him the same, yet I had witnessed the leaf falling over and over. He then turned to don Genaro.

"Isn't that so?" he asked.

Don Genaro did not answer. His eyes were fixed on me.

"It is impossible!" I said.

"You're chained! don Juan exclaimed. "You're chained to your reason."

He explained that the leaf had fallen over and over from that same tree so I would stop trying to understand. In a confidential tone he told me that I had the whole thing pat and yet my mania always blinded me at the end.

"There's nothing to understand. Understanding is only a very small affair, so very small," he said.

At that point don Genaro stood up. He gave a quick glance to don Juan; their eyes met and don Juan looked at the ground in front of him. Don Genaro stood in front of me and began swinging his arms at his sides, back and forth in unison.

"Look, little Carlos," he said. "Look! Look!"

He made an extraordinarily sharp, swishing sound. It was the sound of something ripping. At the precise instant the sound happened, I felt a sensation of vacuity in my lower abdomen. It was the terribly anguishing sensation of falling, not painful, but rather unpleasant and consuming. It lasted a few seconds and then it subsided, leaving a strange itch in my knees. But while the sensation had lasted I experienced another unbelievable phenomenon. I saw don Genaro on top of some mountains that were perhaps ten miles away. The perception lasted only a few seconds and it happened so unexpectedly that I did not have time really to examine it. I cannot recall whether I saw a man-size figure standing on top of the moun-

tains, or a reduced image of don Genaro. I cannot even recall whether or not it was don Genaro. Yet at that moment I was certain beyond any doubt that I was seeing him standing on top of the mountains. However, the moment I thought that I could not possibly see a man ten miles away the perception vanished.

I turned around to look for don Genaro, but he was not there.

The bafflement I experienced was as unique as everything else that was happening to me. My mind buckled under the strain. I felt utterly disoriented.

Don Juan stood up and made me cover the lower part of my abdomen with my hands and press my legs tightly against my body in a squat position. We sat in silence for a while and then he said that he was truly going to refrain from explaining anything to me, because only by acting can one become a sorcerer. He recommended that I leave immediately, otherwise don Genaro would probably kill me in his effort to help me.

"You are going to change directions," he said, "and you'll break your chains."

He said that there was nothing to understand about his or about don Genaro's actions, and that sorcerers were quite capable of performing extraordinary feats.

"Genaro and I are acting from here," he said and pointed to one of the centers of radiation in his diagram. "And it is not the center of understanding, yet you know what it is."

I wanted to say that I did not really know what he was talking about, but he did not give me time and stood up and signaled me to follow him. He began to walk fast and in no time at all I was puffing and sweating trying to keep up with him.

When we were getting inside the car I looked around for don Genaro.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"You know where he is," don Juan snapped at me.

Before I left I sat down with him, as I always do. I had an overwhelming urge to ask for explanations. As don Juan says, explanations are truly my indulgence.

"Where's don Genaro?" I asked cautiously.

"You know where," he said. "Yet you fail everytime because of your insistence on understanding. For example, you knew the other night that Genaro was behind you all the time; you even turned around and saw him."

"No," I protested. "No, I didn't know that."

I was truthful at that. My mind refused to intake that sort of stimuli as being "real," and yet, after ten years of apprenticeship with don Juan my mind could no longer uphold my old ordinary criteria of what is real. However, all the speculations I had thus far engendered about the nature of reality had been mere intellectual manipulations; the proof was that under the pressure of don Juan and don Genaro's acts my mind had entered into an impasse.

Don Juan looked at me and there was such sadness in his eyes that I began to weep. Tears fell freely. For the first time in my life I felt the encumbering weight of my reason. An indescribable anguish overtook me. I wailed involuntarily and embraced him. He gave me a quick blow with his knuckles on the top of my head. I felt it like a ripple down my spine. It had a sobering effect.

"You indulge too much," he said softly.

Epilogue

Don Juan slowly walked around me. He seemed to be deliberating whether or not to say something to me. Twice he stopped and seemed to change his mind.

"Whether or not you return is thoroughly unimportant," he finally said. "However, you now have the need to live like a warrior. You have always known that, now you're simply in the position of having to make use of something you disregarded before. But you had to struggle for this knowledge; it wasn't just given to you; it wasn't just handed down to you. You had to beat it out of yourself. Yet you're still a luminous being. You're still going to die like everyone else. I once told you that there's nothing to change in a luminous egg."

He was quiet for a moment. I knew he was looking at me, but I avoided his eyes.

"Nothing has really changed in you," he said.

Tales of Power

✸

CONTENTS

PART ONE
A WITNESS TO ACTS OF POWER

An Appointment with Knowledge 519
The Dreamer and the Dreamed 565
The Secret of the Luminous Beings 591

PART TWO
THE TONAL AND THE NAGUAL

Having to Believe 613
The Island of the Tonal 626
The Day of the Tonal 638
Shrinking the Tonal 655
In Nagual's Time 671
The Whispering of the Nagual 688
The Wings of Perception 703

PART THREE
THE SORCERERS' EXPLANATION

Three Witnesses to the Nagual 717
The Strategy of a Sorcerer 733
The Bubble of Perception 763
The Predilection of Two Warriors 780

The conditions of a solitary bird are five:
The first, that it flies to the highest point;
the second, that it does not suffer for company,
not even of its own kind;
the third, that it aims its beak to the skies;
the fourth, that it does not have a definite color;
the fifth, that it sings very softly.

— San Juan de la Cruz, *Dichos de Luz y Amor*

PART ONE

A Witness to Acts of Power

AN APPOINTMENT WITH KNOWLEDGE

I had not seen don Juan for several months. It was the autumn of 1971. I had the certainty that he was at don Genaro's house in central Mexico and made the necessary preparations for a six- or seven-day drive to visit him. On the second day of my journey, however, on an impulse, I stopped at don Juan's place in Sonora in the midafternoon. I parked my car and walked a short distance to the house. To my surprise, I found him there.

"Don Juan! I didn't expect to find you here," I said.

He laughed; my surprise seemed to delight him. He was sitting on an empty milk crate by the front door. He appeared to have been waiting for me. There was an air of accomplishment in the ease with which he greeted me. He took off his hat and flourished it in a comical gesture. Then he put it on again and gave me a military salute. He was leaning against the wall, sitting on the crate as if it were a saddle.

"Sit down, sit down," he said in a jovial tone. "Good to see you again."

"I was going to go all the way to central Mexico for nothing," I said. "And then I would've had to drive back to Los Angeles. Finding you here has saved me days and days of driving."

"Somehow you would've found me," he said in a mysterious tone, "but let's say that you owe me the six days that you would've needed to get there, days which you should use in doing something more interesting than pressing down on the gas pedal of your car."

There was something engaging in don Juan's smile. His warmth was contagious.

"Where's your writing gear?" he asked.

I told him that I had left it in the car; he said that I looked unnatural without it and made me go back and get it.

"I have finished writing a book," I said.

He gave me a long, strange look that produced an itching in the pit of my stomach. It was as if he were pushing my middle section with a soft object. I felt like I was going to get ill, but then he turned his head to the side and I regained my original feeling of well-being.

I wanted to talk about my book but he made a gesture that indicated that he did not want me to say anything about it. He smiled. His mood was light and charming and he immediately engaged me in a casual conversation about people and current events. Finally I managed to steer the conversation onto the topic of my interest. I began by mentioning that I had reviewed my early notes and had realized that he had been giving me a detailed description of the sorcerers' world from the beginning of our association. In light of what he had said to me in those stages, I had begun to question the role of hallucinogenic plants.

"Why did you make me take those power plants so many times?" I asked.

He laughed and mumbled very softly, "'Cause you're dumb."

I heard him the first time, but I wanted to make sure and pretended I had not understood.

"I beg your pardon?" I asked.

"You know what I said," he replied and stood up.

He tapped me on the head as he walked by me. "You're rather slow," he said. "And there was no other way to jolt you."

"So none of that was absolutely necessary?" I asked.

"It was, in your case. There are other types of people, however, that do not seem to need them."

He stood next to me, staring at the top of the bushes by the left side of his house; then he sat down again and talked about Eligio, his other apprentice. He said that Eligio had taken psychotropic plants

only once since he became his apprentice, and yet he was perhaps even more advanced than I was.

"To be sensitive is a natural condition of certain people," he said. "You are not. But neither am I. In the final analysis sensitivity matters very little."

"What's the thing that matters then?" I asked.

He seemed to search for an appropriate answer.

"What matters is that a warrior be impeccable," he finally said. "But that's only a way of talking, a way of beating around the bush. You have already accomplished some tasks of sorcery and I believe this is the time to mention the source of everything that matters. So I will say that what matters to a warrior is arriving at the totality of oneself."

"What is the totality of oneself, don Juan?"

"I said that I was only going to mention it. There are still a lot of loose ends in your life that you must tie together before we can talk about the totality of oneself."

He ended our conversation there. He made a gesture with his hands to signal that he wanted me to stop talking. Apparently there was something or somebody nearby. He tilted his head to the left, as if to listen. I could see the whites of his eyes as he focused on the bushes beyond the house to his left. He listened attentively for a few moments and then stood up, came to me and whispered in my ear that we had to leave the house and go for a walk.

"Is there something wrong?" I asked, also in a whisper.

"No. Nothing is wrong," he said. "Everything is rather right."

He led me into the desert chaparral. We walked for perhaps half an hour and then came to a small circular area free from vegetation, a spot about twelve feet in diameter where the reddish dirt was packed and perfectly flat. There were no signs, however, that machinery had cleared and flattened the area. Don Juan sat down in the center of it, facing the southeast. He pointed to a place about five feet away from him and asked me to sit there, facing him.

"What are we going to do here?" I asked.

"We have an appointment here tonight," he replied.

He scanned the surroundings with a quick glance, turning around on his seat until he was again facing the southeast.

His movements had alarmed me. I asked him who we had the appointment with.

"With knowledge," he said. "Let's say that knowledge is prowling around here."

He did not let me hook on to that cryptic answer. He quickly changed the subject and in a jovial tone he urged me to be natural, that is, to take notes and talk as we would have done at his house.

What was most pressing on my mind at that time was the vivid sensation I had had six months before, of "talking" to a coyote. That event meant to me that for the first time I had been capable of visualizing or apprehending, through my senses and in sober consciousness, the sorcerers' description of the world; a description in which communicating with animals through speech was a matter of course.

"We're not going to engage ourselves in dwelling on any experience of that nature," don Juan said upon hearing my question. "It is not advisable for you to indulge in focusing your attention on past events. We may touch on them, but only in reference."

"Why is that so, don Juan?"

"You don't have enough personal power yet to seek the sorcerers' explanation."

"Then there is a sorcerers' explanation!"

"Certainly. Sorcerers are men. We're creatures of thought. We seek clarifications."

"I was under the impression that my great flaw was to seek explanations."

"No. Your flaw is to seek convenient explanations, explanations that fit you and your world. What I object to is your reasonableness. A sorcerer explains things in his world too, but he's not as stiff as you."

"How can I arrive at the sorcerers' explanation?"

"By accumulating personal power. Personal power will make you

slide with great ease into the sorcerers' explanation. The explanation is not what you would call an explanation; nevertheless, it makes the world and its mysteries, if not clear, at least less awesome. That should be the essence of an explanation, but that is not what you seek. You're after the reflection of your ideas."

I lost my momentum to ask questions. But his smile urged me to keep on talking. Another issue of great importance to me was his friend don Genaro and the extraordinary effect that his actions had had on me. Every time I had come into contact with him I had experienced the most outlandish sensory distortions.

Don Juan laughed when I voiced my question.

"Genaro is stupendous," he said. "But for the time being, there is no sense in talking about him or about what he does to you. Again, you don't have enough personal power to unravel that topic. Wait until you have it, then we will talk."

"What if I never have it?"

"If you never have it, we'll never talk."

"At the rate I'm going, will I ever have enough of it?" I asked.

"That's up to you," he replied. "I have given you all the information necessary. Now it's your responsibility to gain enough personal power to tip the scales."

"You're talking in metaphors," I said. "Give it to me straight. Tell me exactly what I should do. If you have already told me, let's say that I've forgotten it."

Don Juan chuckled and lay down, putting his arms behind his head.

"You know exactly what you need," he said.

I told him that sometimes I thought I knew, but that most of the time I had no self-confidence.

"I'm afraid that you are confusing issues," he said. "The self-confidence of the warrior is not the self-confidence of the average man. The average man seeks certainty in the eyes of the onlooker and calls that self-confidence. The warrior seeks impeccability in his own eyes and calls that humbleness. The average man is hooked to his fellow men, while the warrior is hooked only to himself. Perhaps you are

chasing rainbows. You're after the self-confidence of the average man, when you should be after the humbleness of a warrior. The difference between the two is remarkable. Self-confidence entails knowing something for sure; humbleness entails being impeccable in one's actions and feelings."

"I've been trying to live in accordance with your suggestions," I said. "I may not be the best, but I'm the best of myself. Is that impeccability?"

"No. You must do better than that. You must push yourself beyond your limits, all the time."

"But that would be insane, don Juan. No one can do that."

"There are lots of things that you do now which would have seemed insane to you ten years ago. Those things themselves did not change, but your idea of yourself changed; what was impossible before is perfectly possible now and perhaps your total success in changing yourself is only a matter of time. In this affair the only possible course that a warrior has is to act consistently and without reservations. You know enough of the warrior's way to act accordingly, but your old habits and routines stand in your way."

I understood what he meant.

"Do you think that writing is one of the old habits I should change?" I asked. "Should I destroy my new manuscript?"

He did not answer. He stood up and turned to look at the edge of the chaparral.

I told him that I had received letters from various people telling me that it was wrong to write about my apprenticeship. They had cited as a precedent that the masters of Eastern esoteric doctrines demanded absolute secrecy about their teachings.

"Perhaps those masters are just indulging in being masters," don Juan said without looking at me. "I'm not a master, I'm only a warrior. So I really don't know what a master feels like."

"But maybe I'm revealing things I shouldn't, don Juan."

"It doesn't matter what one reveals or what one keeps to oneself," he said. "Everything we do, everything we are, rests on our personal power. If we have enough of it, one word uttered to us might be suf-

ficient to change the course of our lives. But if we don't have enough personal power, the most magnificent piece of wisdom can be revealed to us and that revelation won't make a damn bit of difference."

He then lowered his voice as if he were disclosing a confidential matter to me.

"I'm going to utter perhaps the greatest piece of knowledge anyone can voice," he said. "Let me see what you can do with it.

"Do you know that at this very moment you are surrounded by eternity? And do you know that you can use that eternity, if you so desire?"

After a long pause, during which he urged me with a subtle movement of his eyes to make a statement, I said that I did not understand what he was talking about.

"There! Eternity is there!" he said, pointing to the horizon.

Then he pointed to the zenith. "Or there, or perhaps we can say that eternity is like this." He extended both arms to point to the east and west.

We looked at each other. His eyes held a question.

"What do you say to that?" he asked, coaxing me to ponder upon his words.

I did not know what to say.

"Do you know that you can extend yourself forever in any of the directions I have pointed to?" he went on. "Do you know that one moment can be eternity? This is not a riddle; it's a fact, but only if you mount that moment and use it to take the totality of yourself forever in any direction."

He stared at me.

"You didn't have this knowledge before," he said, smiling. "Now you do. I have revealed it to you, but it doesn't make a bit of difference, because you don't have enough personal power to utilize my revelation. Yet if you did have enough power, my words alone would serve as the means for you to round up the totality of yourself and to get the crucial part of it out of the boundaries in which it is contained."

He came to my side and poked my chest with his fingers; it was a very light tap.

"These are the boundaries I'm talking about," he said. "One can get out of them. We are a feeling, an awareness encased here."

He slapped my shoulders with both hands. My pad and pencil fell to the ground. Don Juan put his foot on the pad and stared at me and then laughed.

I asked him if he minded my taking notes. He said no in a reassuring tone and moved his foot away.

"We are luminous beings," he said, shaking his head rhythmically. "And for a luminous being only personal power matters. But if you ask me what personal power is, I have to tell you that my explanation will not explain it."

Don Juan looked at the western horizon and said that there were still a few hours of daylight left.

"We have to be here for a long time," he explained. "So, we either sit quietly or we talk. It is not natural for you to be silent, so let's keep on talking. This spot is a power place and it must become used to us before nightfall. You must sit here, as naturally as possible, without fear or impatience. It seems that the easiest way for you to relax is to take notes, so write to your heart's content.

"And now, suppose you tell me about your *dreaming*."

His sudden shift caught me unprepared. He repeated his request. There was a great deal to say about it. "Dreaming" entailed cultivating a peculiar control over one's dreams to the extent that the experiences undergone in them and those lived in one's waking hours acquired the same pragmatic valence. The sorcerers' allegation was that under the impact of "dreaming" the ordinary criteria to differentiate a dream from reality became inoperative.

Don Juan's praxis of "dreaming" was an exercise that consisted of finding one's hands in a dream. In other words, one had to deliberately dream that one was looking for and could find one's hands in a dream by simply dreaming that one lifted one's hands to the level of the eyes.

After years of unsuccessful attempts I had finally accomplished

the task. Looking at it in retrospect, it had become evident to me that I had succeeded only after I had gained a degree of control over the world of my everyday life.

Don Juan wanted to know the salient points. I began telling him that the difficulty of setting up the command to look at my hands seemed to be, quite often, insurmountable. He had warned me that the early stage of the preparatory facet, which he called "setting up dreaming," consisted of a deadly game that one's mind played with itself, and that some part of myself was going to do everything it could to prevent the fulfillment of my task. That could include, don Juan had said, plunging me into a loss of meaning, melancholy, or even a suicidal depression. I did not go that far, however. My experience was rather on the light, comical side; nonetheless, the result was equally frustrating. Every time I was about to look at my hands in a dream something extraordinary would happen; I would begin to fly, or my dream would turn into a nightmare, or it would simply become a very pleasant experience of bodily excitation; everything in the dream would extend far beyond the "normal" in matters of vividness and, therefore, be terribly absorbing. My original intention of observing my hands was always forgotten in light of the new situation.

One night, quite unexpectedly, I found my hands in my dreams. I dreamt that I was walking on an unknown street in a foreign city and suddenly I lifted up my hands and placed them in front of my face. It was as if something within myself had given up and had permitted me to watch the backs of my hands.

Don Juan's instructions had been that as soon as the sight of my hands would begin to dissolve or change into something else, I had to shift my view from my hands to any other element in the surroundings of my dream. In that particular dream I shifted my view to a building at the end of the street. When the sight of the building began to dissipate I focused my attention on the other elements of the surroundings in my dream. The end result was an incredibly clear composite picture of a deserted street in some unknown foreign city.

Don Juan made me continue with my account of other experiences in "dreaming." We talked for a long time.

At the end of my report he stood up and went to the bushes. I also stood up. I was nervous. It was an unwarranted sensation since there was nothing precipitating fear or concern. Don Juan returned shortly. He noticed my agitation.

"Calm down," he said, holding my arm gently.

He made me sit down and put my notebook on my lap. He coaxed me to write. His argument was that I should not disturb the power place with unnecessary feelings of fear or hesitation.

"Why do I get so nervous?" I asked.

"It's natural," he said. "Something in you is threatened by your activities in *dreaming*. As long as you did not think about those activities, you were all right. But now that you have revealed your actions you're about to faint.

"Each warrior has his own way of *dreaming*. Each way is different. The only thing which we all have in common is that we play tricks in order to force ourselves to abandon the quest. The countermeasure is to persist in spite of all the barriers and disappointments."

He asked me then if I was capable of selecting topics for "dreaming." I said that I did not have the faintest idea of how to do that.

"The sorcerers' explanation of how to select a topic for *dreaming*," he said, "is that a warrior chooses the topic by deliberately holding an image in his mind while he shuts off his internal dialogue. In other words, if he is capable of not talking to himself for a moment and then holds the image or the thought of what he wants in *dreaming*, even if only for an instant, then the desired topic will come to him. I'm sure you've done that, although you were not aware of it."

There was a long pause and then don Juan began to sniff the air. It was as if he were cleaning his nose; he exhaled three or four times through his nostrils with great force. The muscles of his abdomen contracted in spasms, which he controlled by taking in short gasps of air.

"We won't talk about *dreaming* any more," he said. "You might become obsessed. If one is to succeed in anything, the success must

come gently, with a great deal of effort but with no stress or obsession."

He stood up and walked to the edge of the bushes. He leaned forward and peered into the foliage. He seemed to be examining something in the leaves, without getting too close to them.

"What are you doing?" I asked, unable to contain my curiosity.

He turned to me, smiled and raised his brow.

"The bushes are filled with strange things," he said as he sat down again.

His tone was so casual that it scared me more than if he had let out a sudden yell. My notebook and pencil fell from my hands. He laughed and mimicked me and said that my exaggerated reactions were one of the loose ends that still existed in my life.

I wanted to raise a point but he would not let me talk.

"There's only a bit of daylight left," he said. "There are other things we ought to touch upon before the twilight sets in."

He then added that judging by my production in "dreaming" I must have learned how to stop my internal dialogue at will. I told him that I had.

At the beginning of our association don Juan had delineated another procedure: walking for long stretches without focusing the eyes on anything. His recommendation had been to not look at anything directly but, by slightly crossing the eyes, to keep a peripheral view of everything that presented itself to the eyes. He had insisted, although I had not understood at the time, that if one kept one's unfocused eyes at a point just above the horizon, it was possible to notice, at once, everything in almost the total 180-degree range in front of one's eyes. He had assured me that that exercise was the only way of shutting off the internal dialogue. He used to ask me for reports on my progress, and then he stopped inquiring about it.

I told don Juan that I had practiced the technique for years without noticing any change, but I had expected none anyway. One day, however, I had the shocking realization that I had just walked for about ten minutes without having said a single word to myself.

I mentioned to don Juan that on that occasion I also became cog-

nizant that stopping the internal dialogue involved more than merely curtailing the words I said to myself. My entire thought processes had stopped and I had felt I was practically suspended, floating. A sensation of panic had ensued from that awareness and I had to resume my internal dialogue as an antidote.

"I've told you that the internal dialogue is what grounds us," don Juan said. "The world is such and such or so and so, only because we talk to ourselves about its being such and such or so and so."

Don Juan explained that the passageway into the world of sorcerers opens up after the warrior has learned to shut off the internal dialogue.

"To change our idea of the world is the crux of sorcery," he said. "And stopping the internal dialogue is the only way to accomplish it. The rest is just padding. Now you're in the position to know that nothing of what you've seen or done, with the exception of stopping the internal dialogue, could by itself have changed anything in you, or in your idea of the world. The provision is, of course, that that change should not be deranged. Now you can understand why a teacher doesn't clamp down on his apprentice. That would only breed obsession and morbidity."

He asked for details of other experiences I had had in shutting off the internal dialogue. I recounted everything that I could remember.

We talked until it became dark and I could no longer take notes in a comfortable manner; I had to pay attention to my writing and that altered my concentration. Don Juan became aware of it and began to laugh. He pointed out that I had accomplished another sorcery task, writing without concentrating. The moment he said it, I realized that I really did not pay attention to the act of taking notes. It seemed to be a separate activity I had nothing to do with. I felt odd. Don Juan asked me to sit by him in the center of the circle. He said it was too dark and I was no longer safe sitting so close to the edge of the chaparral. I felt a chill up my back and jumped to his side.

He made me face the southeast and asked me to command myself to be silent and without thoughts. I could not do it at first and had a moment of impatience. Don Juan turned his back to me and told me

to lean on his shoulder for support. He said that once I had quieted down my thoughts, I should keep my eyes open, facing the bushes towards the southeast. In a mysterious tone he added that he was setting up a problem for me, and that if I resolved it I would be ready for another facet of the sorcerers' world.

I posed a weak question about the nature of the problem. He chuckled softly. I waited for his answer and then something in me was turned off. I felt I was suspended. My ears seemed to unplug and a myriad of noises in the chaparral became audible. There were so many that I could not distinguish them individually. I felt I was falling asleep and then all at once something caught my attention. It was not something which involved my thought processes; it was not a vision, or a feature of the environment either, yet my awareness had been engaged by something. I was fully awake. My eyes were focused on a spot on the edge of the chaparral, but I was not looking, or thinking, or talking to myself. My feelings were clear bodily sensations; they did not need words. I felt I was rushing through something indefinite. Perhaps what would have ordinarily been my thoughts were rushing; at any rate, I had the sensation that I had been caught in a landslide and something was avalanching, with me at the crest. I felt the rush in my stomach. Something was pulling me into the chaparral. I could distinguish the dark mass of the bushes in front of me. It was not, however, an undifferentiated darkness as it would ordinarily be. I could see every individual bush as if I were looking at them in a dark twilight. They seemed to be moving; the mass of their foliage looked like black skirts flowing towards me as if they were being blown by the wind, but there was no wind. I became absorbed in their mesmerizing movements; it was a pulsating ripple that seemed to draw them nearer and nearer to me. And then I noticed a lighter silhouette which seemed to be superimposed on the dark shapes of the bushes. I focused my eyes on a spot to the side of the lighter silhouette and I could make out a chartreuse glow on it. Then I looked at it without focusing and I had the certainty that the lighter silhouette was a man hiding in the underbrush.

I was, at that moment, in a most peculiar state of awareness. I was

cognizant of the surroundings and of the mental processes that the surroundings engendered in myself, yet I was not thinking as I ordinarily think. For instance, when I realized that the silhouette superimposed on the bushes was a man, I recalled another occasion on the desert; I had noticed then, while don Genaro and I were walking in the chaparral at night, that a man was hiding in the bushes behind us, but the instant I had attempted to explain the phenomenon rationally I lost sight of the man. This time, however, I felt I had the upper hand and I refused to explain or to think anything at all. For a moment I had the impression that I could hold the man and force him to remain where he was. I then experienced a strange pain in the pit of my stomach. Something seemed to rip inside me and I could not hold the muscles of my midsection tense any longer. At the very moment I let go, the dark shape of an enormous bird, or some sort of flying animal, lurched at me from the chaparral. It was as if the shape of the man had turned into the shape of a bird. I had the clear conscious perception of fear. I gasped and then let out a loud yell and fell on my back.

Don Juan helped me up. His face was very close to mine. He was laughing.

"What was that?" I shouted.

He hushed me, putting his hand over my mouth. He put his lips to my ear and whispered that we had to leave the area in a calm and collected fashion, as if nothing had happened.

We walked side by side. His pace was relaxed and even. A couple of times he turned around quickly. I did the same and twice I caught sight of a dark mass that seemed to be following us. I heard a loud eerie shriek behind me. I experienced a moment of sheer terror; ripples ran through the muscles of my stomach; they came in spasms and grew in intensity until they simply forced my body to run.

The only way of talking about my reaction has to be in don Juan's terminology; and thus I can say that my body, due to the fright I was experiencing, was capable of executing what he had called "the gait of power," a technique he had taught me years before, consisting of running in the darkness without tripping or hurting oneself in any way.

I was not fully aware of what I had done or how I had done it. Suddenly I found myself again at don Juan's house. Apparently he had also run and we had arrived at the same time. He lit his kerosene lantern, hung it from a beam in the ceiling and casually asked me to sit down and relax.

I jogged on the same spot for a while until my nervousness became more manageable. Then I sat down. He forcefully ordered me to act as if nothing had happened and handed me my notebook. I had not realized that in my haste to leave the bushes I had dropped it.

"What happened out there, don Juan?" I finally asked.

"You had an appointment with knowledge," he said, pointing with a movement of his chin to the dark edge of the desert chaparral. "I took you there because I caught a glimpse of knowledge prowling around the house earlier. You might say that knowledge knew that you were coming and was waiting for you. Rather than meeting it here, I felt it was proper to meet it on a power spot. Then I set up a test to see if you had enough personal power to isolate it from the rest of the things around us. You did fine."

"Wait a minute!" I protested. "I saw the silhouette of a man hiding behind a bush and then I saw a huge bird."

"You didn't see a man!" he said emphatically. "Neither did you see a bird. The silhouette in the bushes and what flew to us was a moth. If you want to be accurate in sorcerers' terms, but very ridiculous in your own terms, you could say that tonight you had an appointment with a moth. Knowledge is a moth."

He looked at me piercingly. The light of the lantern created strange shadows on his face. I moved my eyes away.

"Perhaps you'll have enough personal power to unravel that mystery tonight," he said. "If not tonight, perhaps tomorrow; remember, you still owe me six days."

Don Juan stood up and walked to the kitchen in the back of the house. He took the lantern and set it against the wall on the short round stump that he used as a bench. We sat down on the floor opposite each other and served ourselves some beans and meat from a pot that he had placed in front of us. We ate in silence.

He gave me furtive glances from time to time and seemed on the

verge of laughing. His eyes were like two slits. When he looked at me he would open them a bit and the moistness of the corneas reflected the light of the lantern. It was as if he were using the light to create a mirror reflection. He played with it, shaking his head almost imperceptibly every time he focused his eyes on me. The effect was a fascinating quiver of light. I became aware of his maneuvers after he had executed them a couple of times. I was convinced that he was acting with a definite purpose in mind. I felt compelled to ask him about it.

"I have an ulterior reason," he said reassuringly. "I'm soothing you with my eyes. You don't seem to be getting more nervous, do you?"

I had to admit that I felt quite at ease. The steady flicker in his eyes was not menacing and it had not scared or annoyed me in any way.

"How do you soothe me with your eyes?" I asked.

He repeated the imperceptible shake of his head. The corneas of his eyes were indeed reflecting the light of the kerosene lantern.

"Try to do it yourself," he said casually as he gave himself another serving of food. "You can soothe yourself."

I tried to shake my head; my movements were awkward.

"You won't soothe yourself bobbing your head like that," he said and laughed. "You'll give yourself a headache instead. The secret is not in the head shake but in the feeling that comes to the eyes from the area below the stomach. This is what makes the head shake."

He rubbed his umbilical region.

After I had finished eating I slouched against a pile of wood and some burlap sacks. I tried to imitate his head shake. Don Juan seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. He giggled and slapped his thighs.

Then a sudden noise interrupted his laughter. I heard a strange deep sound, like tapping on wood, that came from the chaparral. Don Juan jutted his chin, signaling me to remain alert.

"That's the little moth calling you," he said in an unemotional tone.

I jumped to my feet. The sound ceased instantaneously. I looked at don Juan for an explanation. He made a comical gesture of helplessness, shrugging his shoulders.

"You haven't fulfilled your appointment yet," he added.

I told him that I felt unworthy and that perhaps I should go home and come back when I felt stronger.

"You're talking nonsense," he snapped. "A warrior takes his lot, whatever it may be, and accepts it in ultimate humbleness. He accepts in humbleness what he is, not as grounds for regret but as a living challenge.

"It takes time for every one of us to understand that point and fully live it. I, for instance, hated the mere mention of the word 'humbleness.' I'm an Indian and we Indians have always been humble and have done nothing else but lower our heads. I thought humbleness was not in the warrior's way. I was wrong! I know now that the humbleness of a warrior is not the humbleness of a beggar. The warrior lowers his head to no one, but at the same time, he doesn't permit anyone to lower his head to him. The beggar, on the other hand, falls to his knees at the drop of a hat and scrapes the floor for anyone he deems to be higher; but at the same time, he demands that someone lower than him scrape the floor for him.

"That's why I told you earlier today that I didn't understand what masters felt like. I know only the humbleness of a warrior, and that will never permit me to be anyone's master."

We were quiet for a moment. His words had caused me a profound agitation. I was moved by them and at the same time I felt concerned with what I had witnessed in the chaparral. My conscious assessment was that don Juan was holding out on me and that he must have known what was really taking place.

I was involved in those deliberations when the same strange tapping noise jolted me out of my thoughts. Don Juan smiled and then began to chuckle.

"You like the humbleness of a beggar," he said softly. "You bow your head to reason."

"I always think that I'm being tricked," I said. "That's the crux of my problem."

"You're right. You are being tricked," he retorted with a disarming smile. "That cannot be your problem. The real crux of the matter is that you feel that I am deliberately lying to you, am I correct?"

"Yes. There is something in myself that doesn't let me believe that what's taking place is real."

"You're right again. Nothing of what is taking place is real."

"What do you mean by that, don Juan?"

"Things are real only after one has learned to agree on their realness. What took place this evening, for instance, cannot possibly be real to you, because no one could agree with you about it."

"Do you mean that you didn't see what happened?"

"Of course I did. But I don't count. I am the one who's lying to you, remember?"

Don Juan laughed until he coughed and choked. His laughter was friendly even though he was making fun of me.

"Don't pay too much attention to all my gibberish," he said reassuringly. "I'm just trying to relax you and I know that you feel at home only when you're muddled up."

His expression was deliberately comical and we both laughed. I told him that what he had just said made me feel more afraid than ever.

"You're afraid of me?" he asked.

"Not of you, but of what you represent."

"I represent the warrior's freedom. Are you afraid of that?"

"No. But I'm afraid of the awesomeness of your knowledge. There is no solace for me, no haven to go to."

"You're again confusing issues. Solace, haven, fear, all of them are moods that you have learned without ever questioning their value. As one can see, the black magicians have already engaged all your allegiance."

"Who are the black magicians, don Juan?"

"Our fellow men are the black magicians. And since you are with them, you too are a black magician. Think for a moment. Can you

deviate from the path that they've lined up for you? No. Your thoughts and your actions are fixed forever in their terms. That is slavery. I, on the other hand, brought you freedom. Freedom is expensive, but the price is not impossible. So, fear your captors, your masters. Don't waste your time and your power fearing me."

I knew that he was right, and yet in spite of my genuine agreement with him I also knew that my lifelong habits would unavoidably make me stick to my old path. I did indeed feel like a slave.

After a long silence don Juan asked me if I had enough strength for another bout with knowledge.

"Do you mean with the moth?" I asked half in jest.

His body contorted with laughter. It was as if I had just told him the funniest joke in the world.

"What do you really mean when you say that knowledge is a moth?" I asked.

"I have no other meanings," he replied. "A moth is a moth. I thought that by now, with all your accomplishments, you would have had enough power to *see*. You caught sight of a man instead and that was not true *seeing*."

From the beginning of my apprenticeship, don Juan had depicted the concept of "seeing" as a special capacity that one could develop and which would allow one to apprehend the "ultimate" nature of things.

Over the years of our association I had developed a notion that what he meant by "seeing" was an intuitive grasp of things, or the capacity to understand something at once, or perhaps the ability to see through human interactions and discover covert meanings and motives.

"I should say that tonight, when you faced the moth, you were half looking and half *seeing*," don Juan proceeded. "In that state, although you were not altogether your usual self, you were still capable of being fully aware in order to operate your knowledge of the world."

Don Juan paused and looked at me. I did not know what to say at first.

"How was I operating my knowledge of the world?" I asked.

"Your knowledge of the world told you that in the bushes one can only find animals prowling or men hiding behind the foliage. You held that thought, and naturally you had to find ways to make the world conform to that thought."

"But I wasn't thinking at all, don Juan."

"Let's not call it thinking then. It is rather the habit of having the world always conform to our thoughts. When it doesn't, we simply make it conform. Moths as large as a man cannot be even a thought, therefore, for you, what was in the bushes had to be a man.

"The same thing happened with the coyote. Your old habits decided the nature of that encounter too. Something took place between you and the coyote, but it wasn't talk. I have been in the same quandary myself. I've told you that once I talked with a deer; now you've talked to a coyote, but neither you nor I will ever know what really took place at those times."

"What are you telling me, don Juan?"

"When the sorcerers' explanation became clear to me, it was too late to know what the deer did to me. I said that we talked, but that wasn't so. To say that we had a conversation is only a way of arranging it so I can talk about it. The deer and I did something, but at the time it was taking place I needed to make the world conform to my ideas, just like you did. I had been talking all my life, just like you, therefore my habits prevailed and were extended to the deer. When the deer came to me and did whatever it did, I was forced to understand it as talking."

"Is this the sorcerers' explanation?"

"No. This is my explanation for you. But it is not opposed to the sorcerers' explanation."

His statement threw me into a state of great intellectual excitation. For a while I forgot the prowling moth or even to take notes. I tried to rephrase his statements and we involved ourselves in a long discussion about the reflexive nature of our world. The world, according to don Juan, had to conform to its description; that is, the description reflected itself.

Another point in his elucidation was that we had learned to relate ourselves to our description of the world in terms of what he called "habits." I introduced what I thought was a more engulfing term, intentionality, the property of human consciousness whereby an object is referred to, or is intended.

Our conversation engendered a most interesting speculation. Examined in light of don Juan's explanation, my "talk" with the coyote acquired a new character. I had indeed "intended" the dialogue, since I have never known another avenue of intentional communication. I had also succeeded in conforming to the description that communication takes place through dialogue, and thus I made the description reflect itself.

I had a moment of great elation. Don Juan laughed and said that to be so moved by words was another aspect of my foolery. He made a comical gesture of talking without sounds.

"All of us go through the same shenanigans," he said after a long pause. "The only way to overcome them is to persist in acting like a warrior. The rest comes of itself and by itself."

"What is the rest, don Juan?"

"Knowledge and power. Men of knowledge have both. And yet none of them could tell how they got to have them, except that they had kept on acting like warriors and at a given moment everything changed."

He looked at me. He seemed undecided, then stood up and said that I had no other recourse but to keep my appointment with knowledge.

I felt a shiver; my heart began to pound fast. I got up. Don Juan moved around me as if he were examining my body from every possible angle. He signaled me to sit down and keep on writing.

"If you get too frightened you won't be able to keep your appointment," he said. "A warrior must be calm and collected and must never lose his grip."

"I'm really scared," I said. "Moth or whatever, there is something prowling around out there in the bushes."

"Of course there is!" he exclaimed. "My objection is that you in-

sist on thinking that it is a man, just like you insist on thinking that you talked with a coyote."

A part of me fully understood his point; there was, however, another aspect of myself that would not let go and in spite of the evidence clung steadfast to "reason."

I told don Juan that his explanation did not satisfy my senses, although I was in complete intellectual agreement with it.

"That's the flaw with words," he said in an assuring tone. "They always force us to feel enlightened, but when we turn around to face the world they always fail us and we end up facing the world as we always have, without enlightenment. For this reason, a sorcerer seeks to act rather than to talk and to this effect he gets a new description of the world—a new description where talking is not that important, and where new acts have new reflections."

He sat down by me and gazed into my eyes and asked me to voice what I had really "seen" in the chaparral.

I was confronted at the moment with an absorbing inconsistency. I had seen the dark shape of a man, but I had also seen that shape turn into a bird. I had, therefore, witnessed more than my reason would allow me to consider possible. But rather than discarding my reason altogether, something in myself had selected parts of my experience, such as the size and general contour of the dark shape, and held them as reasonable possibilities, while it discarded other parts, such as the dark shape turning into a bird. And thus I had become convinced that I had seen a man.

Don Juan roared with laughter when I expressed my quandary. He said that sooner or later the sorcerers' explanation would come to my rescue and everything would then be perfectly clear, without having to be reasonable or unreasonable.

"In the meantime all I can do for you is to guarantee that that was not a man," he said.

Don Juan's gaze became quite unnerving. My body shivered involuntarily. He made me feel embarrassed and nervous.

"I'm looking for marks on your body," he explained. "You may not know it, but this evening you had quite a bout out there."

"What kind of marks are you looking for?"

"Not actual physical marks on your body but signs, indications in your luminous fibers, areas of brightness. We are luminous beings and everything we are or everything we feel shows in our fibers. Humans have a brightness peculiar only to them. That's the only way to tell them apart from other luminous living beings.

"If you would have *seen* tonight, you would have noticed that the shape in the bushes was not a luminous living being."

I wanted to ask more but he put his hand on my mouth and hushed me. He then put his mouth to my ear and whispered that I should listen and try to hear a soft rustling, the gentle muffled steps of a moth on the dry leaves and branches on the ground.

I could not hear anything. Don Juan stood up abruptly, picked up the lantern and said that we were going to sit under the ramada by the front door. He led me through the back and around the house, on the edge of the chaparral rather than going through the room and out the front door. He explained that it was essential to make our presence obvious. We half circled around the house on the left side. Don Juan's pace was extremely slow. His steps were weak and vacillating. His arm shook as he held the lantern.

I asked him if there was something wrong with him. He winked at me and whispered that the big moth that was prowling around had an appointment with a young man, and that the slow gait of a feeble old man was an obvious way of showing who was the appointee.

When we finally arrived at the front of the house, don Juan hooked the lantern on a beam and made me sit with my back against the wall. He sat to my right.

"We're going to sit here," he said, "and you are going to write and talk to me in a very normal manner. The moth that lurched at you today is around, in the bushes. After a while it'll come closer to look at you. That's why I've put the lantern on a beam right above you. The light will guide the moth to find you. When it gets to the edge of the bushes, it will call you. It is a very special sound. The sound by itself may help you."

"What kind of sound is it, don Juan?"

"It is a song. A haunting call that moths produce. Ordinarily it cannot be heard, but the moth out there in the bushes is a rare moth; you will hear its call clearly and, providing that you are impeccable, it will remain with you for the rest of your life."

"What is it going to help me with?"

"Tonight, you're going to try to finish what you've started earlier. *Seeing* happens only when the warrior is capable of stopping the internal dialogue.

"Today, you stopped your talk at will, out there in the bushes. And you *saw*. What you *saw* was not clear. You thought that it was a man. I say it was a moth. Neither of us is correct, but that's because we have to talk. I still have the upper hand because I *see* better than you and because I'm familiar with the sorcerers' explanation; so I know, although it's not altogether accurate, that the shape you *saw* tonight was a moth.

"And now, you're going to remain silent and thoughtless and let that little moth come to you again."

I could hardly take notes. Don Juan laughed and urged me to keep on writing as if nothing bothered me. He touched my arm and said that writing was the best protective shield that I had.

"We've never talked about moths," he went on. "The time was not right until now. As you already know, your spirit was unbalanced. To counteract that I taught you to live the warrior's way. Well, a warrior starts off with the certainty that his spirit is off balance; then by living in full control and awareness, but without hurry or compulsion, he does his ultimate best to gain this balance.

"In your case, as in the case of every man, your imbalance was due to the sum total of all your actions. But now your spirit seems to be in the proper light to talk about moths."

"How did you know that this was the right time to talk about moths?"

"I caught a glimpse of the moth prowling around when you arrived. It was the first time it was friendly and open. I had *seen* it before in the mountains around Genaro's house, but only as a menacing figure reflecting your lack of order."

I heard a strange sound at that moment. It was like a muffled creaking of a branch rubbing against another, or like the sputtering of a small motor heard from a distance. It changed scales, like a musical tone, creating an eerie rhythm. Then it stopped.

"That was the moth," don Juan said. "Perhaps you've already noticed that, although the light of the lantern is bright enough to attract moths, there isn't a single one flying around it."

I had not paid attention to it, but once don Juan made me aware of it, I also noticed an incredible silence in the desert around the house.

"Don't get jumpy," he said calmly. "There is nothing in this world that a warrior cannot account for. You see, a warrior considers himself already dead, so there is nothing for him to lose. The worst has already happened to him, therefore he's clear and calm; judging him by his acts or by his words, one would never suspect that he has witnessed everything."

Don Juan's words, and above all his mood, were very soothing to me. I told him that in my day-to-day life I no longer experienced the obsessive fear I used to, but that my body entered into convulsions of fright at the thought of what was out there in the dark.

"Out there, there is only knowledge," he said in a factual tone. "Knowledge is frightening, true; but if a warrior accepts the frightening nature of knowledge he cancels out its awesomeness."

The strange sputtering noise happened again. It seemed closer and louder. I listened carefully. The more attention I paid to it the more difficult it was to determine its nature. It did not seem to be the call of a bird or the cry of a land animal. The tone of each sputter was rich and deep; some were produced in a low key, others in a high one. They had a rhythm and a specific duration; some were long, I heard them like a single unit of sound; others were short and happened in a cluster, like the staccato sound of a machine gun.

"The moths are the heralds or, better yet, the guardians of eternity," don Juan said after the sound had stopped. "For some reason, or for no reason at all, they are the depositories of the gold dust of eternity."

The metaphor was foreign to me. I asked him to explain it.

"The moths carry a dust on their wings," he said. "A dark gold dust. That dust is the dust of knowledge."

His explanation had made the metaphor even more obscure. I vacillated for a moment trying to find the best way of wording my question. But he began to talk again.

"Knowledge is a most peculiar affair," he said, "especially for a warrior. Knowledge for a warrior is something that comes at once, engulfs him, and passes on."

"What does knowledge have to do with the dust on the wings of moths?" I asked after a long pause.

"Knowledge comes floating like specks of gold dust, the same dust that covers the wings of moths. So, for a warrior, knowledge is like taking a shower, or being rained on by specks of dark gold dust."

In the most polite manner I was capable of, I mentioned that his explanations had confused me even more. He laughed and assured me that he was making perfect sense, except that my reason would not allow me to be at ease.

"The moths have been the intimate friends and helpers of sorcerers from time immemorial," he said. "I had not touched upon this subject before, because of your lack of preparation."

"But how can the dust on their wings be knowledge?"

"You'll see."

He put his hand over my notebook and told me to close my eyes and become silent and without thoughts. He said that the call of the moth in the chaparral was going to aid me. If I paid attention to it, it would tell me of imminent events. He stressed that he did not know how the communication between the moth and myself was going to be established, neither did he know what the terms of the communication would be. He urged me to feel at ease and confident and trust my personal power.

After an initial period of impatience and nervousness I succeeded in becoming silent. My thoughts diminished in number until my mind was perfectly blank. The noises of the desert chaparral seemed to have been turned on as I became more calm.

The strange sound that don Juan said was made by a moth oc-

curred again. It registered as a feeling in my body and not as a thought in my mind. It occurred to me that it was not threatening or malevolent at all. It was sweet and simple. It was like a child's call. It brought back the memory of a little boy that I once knew. The long sounds reminded me of his round blond head, the short staccato sounds of his laughter. The most anguishing feeling oppressed me, and yet there were no thoughts in my mind; I felt the anguish in my body. I could no longer remain sitting and slid to the floor on my side. My sadness was so intense that I began to think. I assessed my pain and sorrow and suddenly found myself in the midst of an internal debate about the little boy. The sputtering sound had ceased. My eyes were closed. I heard don Juan standing up and then I felt him helping me to sit up. I did not want to speak. He did not say a word. I heard him moving by me. I opened my eyes; he had knelt in front of me and was examining my face, holding the lantern close to me. He ordered me to put my hands over my stomach. He stood up, went to the kitchen and brought me some water. He splashed some on my face and gave me the rest to drink.

He sat down next to me and handed me my notes. I told him that the sound had involved me in the most painful reverie.

"You are indulging beyond your limits," he said dryly.

He seemed to immerse himself in thought, as if he were searching for an appropriate suggestion to make.

"The problem for tonight is *seeing* people," he finally said. "First you must stop your internal dialogue, then you must bring up the image of the person that you want to *see*; any thought that one holds in mind in a state of silence is properly a command, since there are no other thoughts to compete with it. Tonight, the moth in the bushes wants to help you, so it will sing for you. Its song will bring the golden specks and then you will *see* the person you've selected."

I wanted to have more details, but he made an abrupt gesture and signaled me to proceed.

After struggling for a few minutes to stop my internal dialogue I was thoroughly silent. And then I deliberately held the brief thought of a friend of mine. I kept my eyes closed for what I believed to be

just an instant and then I became aware that someone was shaking me by the shoulders. It was a slow realization. I opened my eyes and found myself lying on my left side. I had apparently fallen asleep so deeply that I did not remember having slumped to the ground. Don Juan helped me to sit up again. He was laughing. He imitated my snoring and said that if he had not witnessed it himself he would not believe that anyone could fall asleep so fast. He said that it was a treat for him to be around me whenever I had to do something that my reason did not understand. He pushed my notebook away from me and said that we had to start all over.

I followed the necessary steps. The strange sputtering sound happened again. This time, however, it did not come from the chaparral; rather it seemed to happen inside of me, as if my lips, or legs, or arms were producing it. The sound soon engulfed me. I felt like soft balls were being sputtered out from or against me; it was a soothing, exquisite feeling of being bombarded by heavy cotton puffs. Suddenly I heard a door blown open by a gust of wind and I was thinking again. I thought that I had ruined another chance. I opened my eyes and found myself in my room. The objects on my desk were as I had left them. The door was open; there was a strong wind outside. The thought crossed my mind that I should check the water heater. I then heard a rattling on the sliding windows that I had put up myself and which did not fit well on the window frame. It was a furious rattling as if someone wanted to enter. I experienced a jolt of fright. I stood up from my chair. I felt something pulling me. I screamed.

Don Juan was shaking me by the shoulders. I excitedly gave him an account of my vision. It had been so vivid that I was shivering. I felt that I had just been at my desk, in my full corporeal form.

Don Juan shook his head in disbelief and said that I was a genius in tricking myself. He did not seem impressed by what I had done. He discarded it flatly and ordered me to start again.

I then heard the mysterious sound again. It came to me, as don Juan had suggested, in the form of a rain of golden specks. I did not feel that they were flat specks or flakes, as he had described them, but rather spherical bubbles. They floated towards me. One of them

burst open and revealed a scene to me. It was as if it had stopped in front of my eyes and opened up, disclosing a strange object. It looked like a mushroom. I was definitely looking at it, and what I was experiencing was not a dream. The mushroomlike object remained unchanged within my field of "vision" and then it popped, as though the light that was shining on it had been turned off. An interminable darkness followed it. I felt a tremor, a very unsettling jolt, and then I had the abrupt realization that I was being shaken. All at once my senses were turned on. Don Juan was shaking me vigorously, and I was looking at him. I must have just opened my eyes at that moment.

He sprinkled water on my face. The coldness of the water was very appealing. After a moment's pause he wanted to know what had happened.

I recounted every detail of my vision.

"But what did I *see*?" I asked.

"Your friend," he retorted.

I laughed and patiently explained that I had "seen" a mushroomlike figure. Although I had no criteria to judge dimensions, I had had the feeling that it was about a foot long.

Don Juan emphasized that feeling was all that counted. He said that my feelings were the gauge that assessed the state of being of the subject that I was "seeing."

"From your description and your feelings I must conclude that your friend must be a very fine man," he said.

I was baffled by his words.

He said that the mushroomlike formation was the essential shape of human beings when a sorcerer was "seeing" them from far away, but when a sorcerer was directly facing the person he was "seeing," the human quality was shown as an egglike cluster of luminous fibers.

"You were not facing your friend," he said. "Therefore, he appeared like a mushroom."

"Why is that so, don Juan?"

"No one knows. That simply is the way men appear in this specific type of *seeing*."

He added that every feature of the mushroomlike formation had a special significance, but that it was impossible for a beginner to accurately interpret that significance.

I then had an intriguing recollection. Some years before, in a state of nonordinary reality elicited by the intake of psychotropic plants, I had experienced or perceived, while I was looking at a water stream, that a cluster of bubbles floated towards me, engulfing me. The golden bubbles I had just envisioned had floated and engulfed me in exactly the same manner. In fact, I could say that both clusters had had the same structure and the same pattern.

Don Juan listened to my commentaries without interest.

"Don't waste your power on trifles," he said. "You are dealing with that immensity out there."

He pointed towards the chaparral with a movement of his hand.

"To turn that magnificence out there into reasonableness doesn't do anything for you. Here, surrounding us, is eternity itself. To engage in reducing it to a manageable nonsense is petty and outright disastrous."

He then insisted that I should attempt to "see" another person from my realm of acquaintances. He added that once the vision had terminated I should strive to open my eyes by myself and surface to the full awareness of my immediate surroundings.

I succeeded in holding the view of another mushroomlike form, but while the first one had been yellowish and small, the second one was whitish, larger and contorted.

By the time we had finished talking about the two shapes I had "seen," I had forgotten the "moth in the bushes," which had been so overwhelming a little while before. I told don Juan that it amazed me that I had such a facility for discarding something so truly uncanny. It was as if I were not the person I knew myself to be.

"I don't see why you make such a fuss out of this," don Juan said. "Whenever the dialogue stops, the world collapses and extraordinary facets of ourselves surface, as though they had been kept heavily guarded by our words. You are like you are, because you tell yourself that you are that way."

After a short rest, don Juan urged me to continue "calling" friends. He said that the point was to attempt to "see" as many times as possible, in order to establish a guideline for feeling.

I called thirty-two persons in succession. After each attempt, he demanded a careful and detailed rendition of everything I had perceived in my vision. He changed that procedure, however, as I became more proficient in my performance, judging by my stopping the internal dialogue in a matter of seconds, by my being capable of opening my eyes by myself at the end of each experience, and by my resuming ordinary activities without any transition. I noticed this change while we were discussing the coloration of the mushroomlike formations. He had already made the point that what I called coloration was not a hue but a glow of different intensities. I was about to describe a yellowish glow that I had envisioned when he interrupted me and accurately described what I had "seen." From that point on he discussed the content of each vision, not as if he had understood what I had said, but as if he had "seen" it himself. When I called him to comment on it he flatly refused to talk about it.

By the time I had finished calling the thirty-two persons, I had realized that I had "seen" a variety of mushroomlike shapes, and glows, and I had had a variety of feelings towards them, ranging from mild delight to sheer disgust.

Don Juan explained that men were filled with configurations that could be wishes, problems, sorrows, worries, and so on. He asserted that only a profoundly powerful sorcerer could untangle the meaning of those configurations, and that I had to be content with viewing only the general shape of men.

I was very tired. There was something indeed fatiguing about those strange shapes. My overall sensation was one of queasiness. I had not liked them. They had made me feel trapped and doomed.

Don Juan commanded me to write in order to dispel the sensation of somberness. And after a long silent interval during which I could not write anything, he asked me to call on people that he himself would select.

A new series of forms emerged. They were not mushroomlike, but

looked more like Japanese cups for sake, turned upside down. Some of them had a headlike formation, just like the foot of sake cups; others were more round. Their shapes were appealing and peaceful. I sensed that there was some inherent feeling of happiness about them. They bounced, as opposed to the earthbound heaviness that the previous batch had exhibited. Somehow, the mere fact that they were there eased my fatigue.

Among the persons he had selected was his apprentice Eligio. When I summoned the vision of Eligio I got a jolt that shook me out of my visionary state. Eligio had a long white shape that jerked and seemed to leap at me. Don Juan explained that Eligio was a very talented apprentice and that he, no doubt, had noticed that someone was "seeing" him.

Another of don Juan's selections was Pablito, don Genaro's apprentice. The jolt that the vision of Pablito gave me was even greater than Eligio's.

Don Juan laughed so hard that tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Why are those people shaped differently?" I asked.

"They have more personal power," he replied. "As you might have noticed, they are not pegged down to the ground."

"What has given them that lightness? Were they born that way?"

"We all are born that light and bouncy, but we become earthbound and fixed. We make ourselves that way. So perhaps we may say that these people are shaped differently because they live like warriors. That's not important though. What's of value is that you are at the edge now. You've called forty-seven people, and there is only one more left in order for you to complete the original forty-eight."

I remembered at that moment that years before he had told me, while discussing corn sorcery and divination, that the number of corn kernels that a sorcerer possessed was forty-eight. He had never explained why.

I asked him again, "Why forty-eight?"

"Forty-eight is our number," he said. "That's what makes us men. I don't know why. Don't waste your power in idiotic questions."

He stood up and stretched his arms and legs. He told me to do the same. I noticed that there was a tinge of light in the sky towards the east. We sat down again. He leaned over and put his mouth to my ear.

"The last person you're going to call is Genaro, the real McCoy," he whispered.

I felt a surge of curiosity and excitation. I breezed through the required steps. The strange sound from the edge of the chaparral became vivid and acquired new strength. I had almost forgotten about it. The golden bubbles engulfed me and then in one of them I saw don Genaro himself. He was standing in front of me, holding his hat in his hand. He was smiling. I hurriedly opened my eyes and was about to speak to don Juan, but before I could say a word my body stiffened like a board; my hair stood on end and for a long moment I did not know what to do or say. Don Genaro was standing right in front of me. In person!

I turned to don Juan; he was smiling. Then both of them broke into a giant laugh. I also tried to laugh. I could not. I stood up.

Don Juan handed me a cup of water. I drank it automatically. I thought he was going to sprinkle water on my face. Instead, he refilled my cup.

Don Genaro scratched his head and hid a grin.

"Aren't you going to greet Genaro?" don Juan asked.

It took an enormous effort for me to organize my thoughts and my feelings. I finally mumbled some greetings to don Genaro. He took a bow.

"You called me, didn't you?" he asked, smiling.

I muttered my amazement at having found him standing there.

"He did call you," don Juan interjected.

"Well, here I am," don Genaro said to me. "What can I do for you?"

Slowly my mind seemed to become organized and finally I had a sudden insight. My thoughts were crystal clear and I "knew" what had really taken place. I figured that don Genaro had been visiting with don Juan, and that as soon as they had heard my car approach-

ing, don Genaro had slipped into the bushes and had remained in hiding until it got dark. I believed the evidence was convincing. Don Juan, since he had no doubt engineered the entire affair, gave me clues from time to time, thus guiding its development. At the appropriate time, don Genaro had made me notice his presence, and when don Juan and I were walking back to the house, he followed us in the most obvious manner in order to arouse my fear. Then he had waited in the chaparral and made the strange sound whenever don Juan had signaled him. The final signal to come out from behind the bushes must have been given by don Juan while my eyes were closed after he had asked me to "call" don Genaro. Then don Genaro must have walked to the ramada and waited until I opened my eyes and then scared me out of my wits.

The only incongruencies in my logical explanatory scheme were that I had actually seen the man hiding in the bushes turn into a bird, and that I had first visualized don Genaro as an image in a golden bubble. In my vision he had been dressed exactly as he was in person. Since there was no logical way for me to explain those incongruencies, I assumed, as I have always done in similar circumstances, that the emotional stress may have played an important role in determining what I "believed I saw."

I began to laugh quite involuntarily at the thought of their preposterous trick. I told them about my deductions. They laughed uproariously. I honestly believed that their laughter was the giveaway.

"You were hiding in the bushes, weren't you?" I asked don Genaro.

Don Juan sat down and held his head in both hands.

"No. I wasn't hiding," don Genaro said patiently. "I was far from here and then you called, so I came to see you."

"Where were you, don Genaro?"

"Far away."

"How far?"

Don Juan interrupted me and said that don Genaro had showed up as an act of deference to me, and that I could not ask where he had been, because he had been nowhere.

Don Genaro came to my defense and said that it was all right to ask him anything.

"If you were not hiding around the house, where were you, don Genaro?" I asked.

"I was at my house," he said with great candor.

"In central Mexico?"

"Yes! It's the only house I've got."

They looked at each other and again broke into laughter. I knew that they were kidding me, but I decided not to contest the point any further. I thought they must have had a reason for engaging themselves in such an elaborate production. I sat down.

I felt that I was truthfully cut in two; some part of me was not shocked at all and could accept any of don Juan or don Genaro's acts at their face value. But there was another part of me that flatly refused; it was my strongest part. My conscious assessment was that I had accepted don Juan's sorcery description of the world merely on an intellectual basis, while my body as a whole entity refused it, thus my dilemma. But then over the course of the years of my association with don Juan and don Genaro I had experienced extraordinary phenomena and those had been bodily experiences, not intellectual ones. Earlier that very night I had executed the "gait of power," which, from the point of view of my intellect, was an inconceivable accomplishment; and best of all, I had had incredible visions through no other means than my own volition.

I explained to them the nature of my painful and at the same time bona fide perplexity.

"This guy is a genius," don Juan said to don Genaro, shaking his head in disbelief.

"You're a huge genius, Carlitos," don Genaro said as if he were relaying a message.

They sat down on either side of me, don Juan to my right and don Genaro to my left. Don Juan observed that soon it was going to be morning. At that instant I again heard the moth's call. It had moved. The sound was coming from the opposite direction. I looked at both of them, holding their gaze. My logical scheme began to disintegrate.

The sound had a mesmerizing richness and depth. Then I heard muffled steps, soft feet crushing the dry underbrush. The sputtering sound came closer and I huddled against don Juan. He dryly ordered me to "see" it. I made a supreme effort, not so much to please him as to please myself. I had been sure that don Genaro was the moth. But don Genaro was sitting with me; what, then, was in the bushes? A moth?

The sputtering sound echoed in my ears. I could not stop my internal dialogue altogether. I heard the sound but I could not feel it in my body as I had done earlier. I heard definite steps. Something was creeping in the dark. There was a loud cracking noise, as if a branch had been snapped in two, and suddenly a terrifying memory seized me. Years before I had spent a dreadful night in the wilderness and had been harassed by something, something very light and soft that had stepped on my neck over and over while I crouched on the ground. Don Juan had explained the event as an encounter with "the ally," a mysterious force that a sorcerer learned to perceive as an entity.

I leaned closer to don Juan and whispered what I had remembered. Don Genaro crawled on all fours to get closer to us.

"What did he say?" he asked don Juan in a whisper.

"He said that there is an ally out there," don Juan replied in a low voice.

Don Genaro crawled back and sat down. Then he turned to me and said in a loud whisper, "You're a genius."

They laughed quietly. Don Genaro pointed towards the chaparral with a movement of his chin.

"Go out there and grab it," he said. "Take off your clothes and scare the devil out of that ally."

They shook with laughter. The sound in the meantime had ceased. Don Juan ordered me to stop my thoughts but to keep my eyes open, focused on the edge of the chaparral in front of me. He said that the moth had changed positions because don Genaro was there, and that if it were going to manifest itself to me, it would choose to come from the front.

After a moment's struggle to quiet my thoughts, I perceived the sound again. It was richer than ever. I heard first the muffled steps on dry twigs and then I felt them on my body. At that instant I distinguished a dark mass directly in front of me, at the edge of the chaparral.

I felt I was being shaken. I opened my eyes. Don Juan and don Genaro were standing above me and I was kneeling, as if I had fallen asleep in a crouching position. Don Juan gave me some water and I sat down again with my back against the wall.

A short while later it was dawn. The chaparral seemed to wake up. The morning cold was crisp and invigorating.

The moth had not been don Genaro. My rational structure was falling apart. I did not want to ask any more questions, nor did I want to remain quiet. I finally had to talk.

"But if you were in central Mexico, don Genaro, how did you get here?" I asked.

Don Genaro made some ludicrous and utterly hilarious gestures with his mouth.

"I'm sorry," he said to me, "my mouth doesn't want to talk."

He then turned to don Juan and said, grinning, "Why don't you tell him?"

Don Juan vacillated. Then he said that don Genaro, as a consummate artist of sorcery, was capable of prodigious deeds.

Don Genaro's chest swelled as if don Juan's words were inflating it. He seemed to have inhaled so much air that his chest looked twice its normal size. He appeared to be on the verge of floating. He leaped in the air. I had the impression that the air inside his lungs had forced him to jump. He paced back and forth on the dirt floor until he apparently got his chest under control; he patted it and with great force ran the palms of his hands from his pectoral muscles to his stomach as if he were deflating the inner tube of a tire. He finally sat down.

Don Juan was grinning. His eyes were shining with sheer delight.

"Write your notes," he ordered me softly. "Write, write or you'll die!"

Then he remarked that even don Genaro no longer felt that my taking notes was so outlandish.

"That's right!" don Genaro retorted. "I've been thinking of taking up writing myself."

"Genaro is a man of knowledge," don Juan said dryly. "And being a man of knowledge, he's perfectly capable of transporting himself over great distances."

He reminded me that once, years before, the three of us had been in the mountains, and that don Genaro, in an effort to help me overcome my stupid reason, had taken a prodigious leap to the peaks of the Sierras, ten miles away. I remembered the event, but I also remembered that I could not even conceive that he had jumped.

Don Juan added that don Genaro was capable of performing extraordinary feats at certain times.

"Genaro at certain times is not Genaro but his double," he said.

He repeated it three or four times. Then both of them watched me as if waiting for my impending reaction.

I had not understood what he meant by "his double." He had never mentioned that before. I asked for a clarification.

"There is another Genaro," he explained.

All three of us looked at one another. I became very apprehensive. Don Juan urged me with a movement of his eyes to keep on talking.

"Do you have a twin brother?" I asked, turning to don Genaro.

"Of course," he said. "I have a twin."

I could not determine whether or not they were putting me on. They both giggled with the abandon of children that were pulling a prank.

"You may say," don Juan went on, "that at this moment Genaro is his twin."

That statement brought both of them to the ground with laughter. But I could not enjoy their mirth. My body shivered involuntarily.

Don Juan said in a severe tone that I was too heavy and self-important.

"Let go!" he commanded me dryly. "You know that Genaro is a

sorcerer and an impeccable warrior. So he's capable of performing deeds that would be unthinkable for the average man. His double, the other Genaro, is one of those deeds."

I was speechless. I could not conceive that they were just teasing me.

"For a warrior like Genaro," he went on, "to produce the other is not such a farfetched enterprise."

After pondering for a long time what to say next, I asked, "Is the other like the self?"

"The other is the self," don Juan replied.

His explanation had taken an incredible turn, and yet it was not really more incredible than anything else they did.

"What's the other made of?" I asked don Juan after minutes of indecision.

"There is no way of knowing that," he said.

"Is it real or just an illusion?"

"It's real of course."

"Would it be possible then to say that it is made of flesh and blood?" I asked.

"No. It would not be possible," don Genaro answered.

"But if it is as real as I am . . ."

"As real as you?" don Juan and don Genaro interjected in unison.

They looked at each other and laughed until I thought they were going to get ill. Don Genaro threw his hat on the floor and danced around it. His dance was agile and graceful and, for some inexplicable reason, utterly funny. Perhaps the humor was in the exquisitely "professional" movements he executed. The incongruency was so subtle and at the same time so remarkable that I doubled up with laughter.

"The trouble with you, Carlitos," he said as he sat down again, "is that you're a genius."

"I have to know about the double," I said.

"There's no way of knowing whether he's flesh and blood," don Juan said. "Because he is not as real as you. Genaro's double is as real as Genaro. Do you see what I mean?"

"But you have to admit, don Juan, that there must be a way to know."

"The double is the self; that explanation should suffice. If you would *see*, however, you'd know that there is a great difference between Genaro and his double. For a sorcerer who *sees*, the double is brighter."

I felt I was too weak to ask any more questions. I put my writing pad down and for a moment I thought I was going to pass out. I had tunnel vision; everything around me was dark with the exception of a round spot of clear scenery in front of my eyes.

Don Juan said that I had to get some food. I was not hungry. Don Genaro announced that he was famished, stood up and went to the back of the house. Don Juan also stood up and signaled me to follow. In the kitchen, don Genaro gave himself a serving of food and then became involved in the most comical mimicking of a person who wants to eat but can't swallow. I thought that don Juan was going to die; he roared, kicked, cried, coughed and choked with laughter. I thought I too was going to split my sides. Don Genaro's antics were priceless.

He finally gave up and looked at don Juan and me in succession; he had shiny eyes and a beaming smile.

"It doesn't work," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

I ate a huge amount of food, and so did don Juan; then all of us returned to the front of the house. The sunlight was brilliant, the sky was clear and the morning breeze sharpened the air. I felt happy and strong.

We sat in a triangle facing one another. After a polite silence I decided to ask them to clarify my dilemma. I felt that I was again in top form and wanted to exploit my strength.

"Tell me more about the double, don Juan," I said.

Don Juan pointed at don Genaro and don Genaro bowed.

"There he is," don Juan said. "There is nothing to tell. He's here for you to witness him."

"But he's don Genaro," I said in a feeble attempt to guide the conversation.

"Surely I'm Genaro," he said and perked his shoulders.

"What is a double then, don Genaro?" I asked.

"Ask him," he snapped, pointing to don Juan. "He's the one who talks. I'm dumb."

"A double is the sorcerer himself, developed through his *dreaming*," don Juan explained. "A double is an act of power to a sorcerer but only a tale of power to you. In the case of Genaro, his double is indistinguishable from the original. That's because his impeccability as a warrior is supreme; thus, you've never noticed the difference yourself. But in the years that you've known him, you've been with the original Genaro only twice; every other time you've been with his double."

"But this is preposterous!" I exclaimed.

I felt an anxiety building up in my chest. I became so agitated that I dropped my writing pad, and my pencil rolled out of sight. Don Juan and don Genaro practically dove to the ground and began the most farcical search for it. I had never seen a more astonishing performance of theatrical magic and sleight of hand. Except that there was no stage, or props, or any type of gadgetry, and most likely the performers were not using sleight of hand.

Don Genaro, the head magician, and his assistant, don Juan, produced in a matter of minutes the most astounding, bizarre and outlandish collection of objects which they found underneath, or behind, or above every object within the periphery of the ramada.

In the style of stage magic, the assistant set up the props, which in this case were the few items on the dirt floor—rocks, burlap sacks, pieces of wood, a milk crate, a lantern and my jacket—then the magician, don Genaro, would proceed to find an object, which he would throw away as soon as he had attested that it was not my pencil. The collection of objects found included pieces of clothing, wigs, eyeglasses, toys, utensils, pieces of machinery, women's underwear, human teeth, sandwiches, and religious objects. One of them was outright disgusting. It was a piece of compact human excrement that don Genaro took from underneath my jacket. Finally, don Genaro found my pencil and handed it to me after dusting it off with the tail of his shirt.

They celebrated their clowning with yells and chuckles. I found

myself watching, unable to join them.

"Don't take things so seriously, Carlitos," don Genaro said with a tone of concern. "Otherwise you're going to bust a . . ."

He made a ludicrous gesture that could have meant anything.

After their laughter subsided I asked don Genaro what a double did, or what a sorcerer did with the double.

Don Juan answered. He said that the double had power, and that it was used to accomplish feats that would be unimaginable under ordinary terms.

"I've told you time and time again that the world is unfathomable," he said to me. "And so are we, and so is every being that exists in this world. It is impossible, therefore, to reason out the double. You've been allowed to witness it, though, and that should be more than enough."

"But there must be a way to talk about it," I said. "You yourself have told me that you explained your conversation with the deer in order to talk about it. Can't you do the same with the double?"

He was quiet for a moment. I pleaded with him. The anxiety I was experiencing was beyond anything I had ever gone through.

"Well, a sorcerer can double up," don Juan said. "That's all one can say."

"But is he aware that he is doubled?"

"Of course he's aware of it."

"Does he know that he is in two places at once?"

Both of them looked at me and then they exchanged a glance.

"Where is the other don Genaro?" I asked.

Don Genaro leaned towards me and stared into my eyes.

"I don't know," he said softly. "No sorcerer knows where his other is."

"Genaro is right," don Juan said. "A sorcerer has no notion that he is in two places at once. To be aware of that would be the equivalent of facing his double, and the sorcerer that finds himself face to face with himself is a dead sorcerer. That is the rule. That is the way power has set things up. No one knows why."

Don Juan explained that by the time a warrior had conquered

"dreaming" and "seeing" and had developed a double, he must have also succeeded in erasing personal history, self-importance, and routines. He said that all the techniques which he had taught me and which I had considered to be empty talk were, in essence, means for removing the impracticality of having a double in the ordinary world, by making the self and the world fluid, and by placing them outside the bounds of prediction.

"A fluid warrior can no longer make the world chronological," don Juan explained. "And for him, the world and himself are no longer objects. He's a luminous being existing in a luminous world. The double is a simple affair for a sorcerer because he knows what he's doing. To take notes is a simple affair for you, but you still scare Genaro with your pencil."

"Can an outsider, looking at a sorcerer, see that he is in two places at once?" I asked don Juan.

"Certainly. That would be the only way to know it."

"But can't one logically assume that the sorcerer would also notice that he has been in two places?"

"Aha!" don Juan exclaimed. "For once you've got it right. A sorcerer may certainly notice afterwards that he has been in two places at once. But this is only bookkeeping and has no bearing on the fact that while he's acting he has no notion of his duality."

My mind boggled. I felt that if I did not keep on writing I would explode.

"Think of this," he went on. "The world doesn't yield to us directly, the description of the world stands in between. So, properly speaking, we are always one step removed and our experience of the world is always a recollection of the experience. We are perennially recollecting the instant that has just happened, just passed. We recollect, recollect, recollect."

He turned his hand over and over to give me the feeling of what he meant.

"If our entire experience of the world is recollection, then it's not so outlandish to conclude that a sorcerer can be in two places at once. This is not the case from the point of view of his own perception,

because in order to experience the world, a sorcerer, like every other man, has to recollect the act he has just performed, the event he has just witnessed, the experience he has just lived. In his awareness there is only a single recollection. But for an outsider looking at the sorcerer it may appear as if the sorcerer is acting two different episodes at once. The sorcerer, however, recollects two separate single instants, because the glue of the description of time is no longer binding him."

When don Juan had finished talking I was sure I was running a temperature.

Don Genaro examined me with curious eyes.

"He's right," he said. "We're always one jump behind."

He moved his hand as don Juan had done; his body started to jerk and he jumped back on his seat. It was as if he had the hiccups and the hiccups were forcing his body to jump back. He began to move backwards, jumping on his seat, and went all the way to the end of the ramada and back.

The sight of don Genaro leaping backwards on his buttocks, instead of being funny as it should have been, threw me into an attack of fear so intense that don Juan had to strike me repeatedly on the top of my head with his knuckles.

"I just can't grasp all this, don Juan," I said.

"I can't either," don Juan retorted, shrugging his shoulders.

"Neither can I, dear Carlitos," don Genaro added.

My fatigue, the bulk of my sensory experience, the mood of lightness and humor that prevailed, and don Genaro's clowning were too much for my nerves. I could not stop the agitation in my stomach muscles.

Don Juan made me roll on the ground until I had regained my calmness, then I sat down facing them again.

"Is the double solid?" I asked don Juan after a long silence.

They looked at me.

"Does the double have corporealness?" I asked.

"Certainly," don Juan said. "Solidity, corporealness are memories. Therefore, like everything else we feel about the world, they are

memories we accumulate. Memories of the description. You have the memory of my solidity, the same way you have the memory of communicating through words. Thus, you talked with a coyote and you feel me as being solid."

Don Juan put his shoulder next to mine and nudged me lightly. "Touch me," he said.

I patted him and then I embraced him. I was close to tears.

Don Genaro stood up and came closer to me. He looked like a small child with shiny mischievous eyes. He puckered up his lips and looked at me for a long moment.

"What about me?" he asked, trying to hide a smile. "Aren't you going to embrace me too?"

I stood up and extended my arms to touch him; my body seemed to freeze on the spot. I had no power to move. I tried to force my arms to reach him, but my struggle was in vain.

Don Juan and don Genaro stood by, watching me. I felt my body contorting under an unknown pressure.

Don Genaro sat down and pretended to sulk because I had not embraced him; he pouted and hit the ground with his heels, then both of them exploded into more roaring laughter.

The muscles of my stomach trembled, making my whole body shake. Don Juan pointed out that I was moving my head the way he had recommended earlier, and that that was the chance to soothe myself by reflecting a beam of light on the cornea of my eyes. He forcefully dragged me from under the roof of his ramada to the open field and manipulated my body into position so that my eyes would catch the eastern sunlight; but by the time he had put my body in place, I had stopped shivering. I noticed that I was clutching my notebook only after don Genaro said that the weight of the sheets was giving me the shivers.

I told don Juan that my body was pulling me to leave. I waved my hand to don Genaro. I did not want to give them time to make me change my mind.

"Good-by, don Genaro," I yelled. "I have to go now."

He waved back at me.

Don Juan walked a few yards with me towards my car.

"Do you also have a double, don Juan?" I asked.

"Of course!" he exclaimed.

I had at that moment a maddening thought. I wanted to discard it and leave in a hurry but something in myself kept on needling me. Over the course of the years of our association, it had become customary for me that every time I wanted to see don Juan I would just go to Sonora or central Mexico and I would always find him waiting for me. I had learned to take that for granted and it had never occurred to me until then to think anything of it.

"Tell me something, don Juan," I said, half in jest. "Are you yourself or are you your double?"

He leaned over towards me. He was grinning.

"My double," he whispered.

My body leaped in the air as if I had been propelled by a formidable force. I ran to my car.

"I was just kidding," don Juan said in a loud voice. "You can't go yet. You still owe me five more days."

Both of them ran towards my car as I was backing up. They were laughing and jumping up and down.

"Carlitos, call me any time!" don Genaro shouted.

THE DREAMER AND THE DREAMED

I drove to don Juan's house and arrived there in the early morning. I had spent the night in a motel on the way down so I would get to his house before noon.

Don Juan was in the back and came to the front when I called him. He gave me a warm greeting and the impression that he was pleased to see me. He made a comment that I thought was intended to put me at ease but produced the opposite effect.

"I heard you coming," he said as he grinned. "And I ran to the back. I was afraid that if I had stayed here you would've been frightened."

He casually remarked that I was somber and heavy. He said that I reminded him of Eligio, who was morbid enough to be a good sorcerer but too morbid to become a man of knowledge. He added that the only way to counteract the devasting effect of the sorcerers' world was to laugh at it.

He was right in his assessment of my mood. I was indeed worried and frightened. We went for a long walk. It took hours for my feelings to ease up. Walking with him made me feel better than if he had attempted to talk me out of my somberness.

We returned to his house in the late afternoon. I was famished. After eating we sat under his ramada. The sky was clear. The afternoon light made me feel complacent. I wanted to talk.

"I've felt uneasy for months," I said. "There was something truly

awesome in what you and don Genaro said and did the last time I was here."

Don Juan did not say anything. He got up and moved around the ramada.

"I've got to talk about this," I said. "It obsesses me and I can't stop pondering upon it."

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

I was not afraid but baffled, overwhelmed by what I had heard and witnessed. The loopholes in my reason were so gigantic that either I had to repair them or I had to dispose of my reason altogether.

My comments made him laugh.

"Don't throw away your reason yet," he said. "It's not time for it. It'll happen though, but I don't think that now is the moment."

"Should I try to find an explanation for what happened, then?" I asked.

"Certainly!" he retorted. "It's your duty to put your mind at ease. Warriors do not win victories by beating their heads against walls but by overtaking the walls. Warriors jump over the walls; they don't demolish them."

"How can I jump over this one?" I asked.

"First of all, I think it's deadly wrong for you to regard anything in such a serious fashion," he said as he sat down by my side. "There are three kinds of bad habits which we use over and over when confronted with unusual life situations. First, we may disregard what's happening or has happened and feel as if it had never occurred. That one is the bigot's way. Second, we may accept everything at its face value and feel as if we know what's going on. That's the pious man's way. Third, we may become obsessed with an event because either we cannot disregard it or we cannot accept it wholeheartedly. That's the fool's way. Your way? There is a fourth, the correct one, the warrior's way. A warrior acts as if nothing had ever happened, because he doesn't believe in anything, yet he accepts everything at its face value. He accepts without accepting and disregards without disregarding. He never feels as if he knows, neither does he feel as if nothing had ever happened. He acts as if he is in

control, even though he might be shaking in his boots. To act in such a manner dissipates obsession."

We were quiet for a long time. Don Juan's words were like a balm to me.

"Can I talk about don Genaro and his double?" I asked.

"It depends on what you want to say about him," he replied. "Are you going to indulge in being obsessed?"

"I want to indulge in explanations," I said. "I'm obsessed because I haven't dared come to see you and I haven't been able to talk about my qualms and doubts with anyone."

"Don't you talk with your friends?"

"I do, but how could they help me?"

"I never thought that you needed help. You must cultivate the feeling that a warrior needs nothing. You say you need help. Help for what? You have everything needed for the extravagant journey that is your life. I have tried to teach you that the real experience is to be a man, and that what counts is being alive; life is the little detour that we are taking now. Life in itself is sufficient, self-explanatory and complete.

"A warrior understands this and lives accordingly; therefore, one may say without being presumptuous that the experience of experiences is being a warrior."

He seemed to wait for me to say something. I hesitated for a moment. I wanted to select my words carefully.

"If a warrior needs solace," he went on, "he simply chooses anyone and expresses to that person every detail of his turmoil. After all, the warrior is not seeking to be understood or helped; by talking he's merely relieving himself of his pressure. That is, providing that the warrior is given to talking; if he's not, he tells no one. But you're not living like a warrior altogether. Not yet anyway. And the pitfalls that you encounter must be truly monumental. You have all my sympathy."

He was not being facetious. Judging by the concern in his eyes, he seemed to be one who had been there himself. He stood up and patted me on the head. He walked back and forth the length of the

ramada and looked casually to the chaparral around the house. His movements evoked a sensation of restlessness in me.

In order to relax I began to talk about my dilemma. I felt that it was inherently too late for me to pretend to be an innocent bystander. Under his guidance I had trained myself to achieve strange perceptions, such as "stopping the internal dialogue," and controlling my dreams. Those were instances that could not be faked. I had followed his suggestions, although never to the letter, and had partially succeeded in disrupting daily routines, assuming responsibility for my acts, erasing personal history and had finally arrived at a point which years before I had dreaded; I was capable of being alone without disrupting my physical or emotional well-being. That was perhaps my single most astounding triumph. From the point of view of my former expectations and moods, to be alone and not "go out of my mind" was an inconceivable state. I was keenly aware of all the changes that had taken place in my life and in my view of the world, and I was also aware that it was somehow superfluous to be affected so profoundly by don Juan and don Genaro's revelation about the "double."

"What's wrong with me, don Juan?" I asked.

"You indulge," he snapped. "You feel that indulging in doubts and tribulations is the sign of a sensitive man. Well, the truth of the matter is that you're the farthest thing from being sensitive. So why pretend? I told you the other day, a warrior accepts in humbleness what he is."

"You make it sound as if I were confusing myself deliberately," I said.

"We do confuse ourselves deliberately," he said. "All of us are aware of our doings. Our puny reason deliberately makes itself into the monster it fancies itself to be. It's too little for such a big mold, though."

I explained to him that my dilemma was perhaps more complex than what he was making it out to be. I said that as long as he and don Genaro were men like myself their superior control made them models for my own behavior. But if they were in essence men dras-

tically different than I, then I could not conceive of them any longer as models, but as oddities, which I could not possibly aspire to emulate.

"Genaro is a man," don Juan said in a reassuring tone. "He's no longer a man like yourself, true. But that's his accomplishment and it shouldn't give rise to fear on your part. If he's different, the more reason to admire him."

"But his difference is not a human difference," I said.

"And what do you think it is? The difference between a man and a horse?"

"I don't know. But he's not like me."

"He was at one time, though."

"But can his change be understood by me?"

"Of course. You yourself are changing."

"Do you mean that I will develop a double?"

"No one develops a double. That's only a way of talking about it. You, for all the talking you do, are a sap for words. You get trapped by their meanings. Now you think that one develops a double through evil means, I suppose. All of us luminous beings have a double. All of us! A warrior learns to be aware of it, that's all. There are seemingly insurmountable barriers protecting that awareness. But that's expected; those barriers are what makes arriving at that awareness such a unique challenge."

"Why am I so afraid of it, don Juan?"

"Because you're thinking that the double is what the word says, a double, or another you. I chose those words in order to describe it. The double is oneself and cannot be faced in any other way."

"What if I don't want to have it?"

"The double is not a matter of personal choice. Neither is it a matter of personal choice who is selected to learn the sorcerers' knowledge that leads to that awareness. Have you ever asked yourself, why you in particular?"

"All the time. I've asked you that question hundreds of times but you've never answered it."

"I didn't mean that you should ask it as a question that begs an an-

swer, but in the sense of a warrior's pondering on his great fortune, the fortune of having found a challenge.

"To make it into an ordinary question is the device of a conceited ordinary man who wants to be either admired or pitied for it. I have no interest in that kind of question, because there is no way of answering it. The decision of picking you was a design of power; no one can discern the designs of power. Now that you've been selected, there is nothing that you can do to stop the fulfillment of that design."

"But you yourself told me, don Juan, that one can always fail."

"That's true. One can always fail. But I think that you are referring to something else. You want to find a way out. You want to have the freedom to fail and quit on your own terms. Too late for that. A warrior is in the hands of power and his only freedom is to choose an impeccable life. There is no way to fake triumph or defeat. Your reason may want you to fail altogether in order to obliterate the totality of yourself. But there is a countermeasure which will not permit you to declare a false victory or defeat. If you think that you can retreat to the haven of failure, you're out of your mind. Your body will stand guard and will not let you go either way."

He began to chuckle softly.

"Why do you laugh?" I asked.

"You're in a terrible spot," he said. "It's too late for you to retreat but too soon to act. All you can do is witness. You're in the miserable position of an infant who cannot return to the mother's womb, but neither can he run around and act. All an infant can do is witness and listen to the stupendous tales of action being told to him. You are at that precise point now. You cannot go back to the womb of your old world, but you cannot act with power either. For you there is only witnessing acts of power and listening to tales, tales of power.

"The double is one of those tales. You know that, and that's why your reason is so taken by it. You are beating your head against a wall if you pretend to understand. All that I can say about it, by way of explanation, is that the double, although it is arrived at through *dreaming*, is as real as it can be."

"According to what you've told me, don Juan, the double can perform acts. Can the double then . . .?"

He did not let me continue with my line of reasoning. He reminded me that it was inappropriate to say that he had told me about the double, when I could say that I had witnessed it.

"Obviously the double can perform acts," I said.

"Obviously!" he replied.

"But can the double act in behalf of the self?"

"It is the self, damn it!"

I found it very difficult to explain myself. I had in mind that if a sorcerer could perform two actions at once, his capacity for utilitarian production had to double. He could work two jobs, be in two places, see two persons, and so on, at once.

Don Juan listened patiently.

"Let me put it this way," I said. "Hypothetically, can don Genaro kill someone hundreds of miles away by letting his double do it?"

Don Juan looked at me. He shook his head and moved his eyes away.

"You're filled with tales of violence," he said. "Genaro cannot kill anyone, simply because he no longer has any interest in his fellow men. By the time a warrior is capable of conquering *seeing* and *dreaming* and having the awareness of his luminosity, there is no such interest left in him."

I pointed out that at the beginning of my apprenticeship he had made the statement that a sorcerer, aided by his "ally," could be transported over hundreds of miles to deliver a blow to his enemies.

"I am responsible for your confusion," he said. "But you must remember that on another occasion I told you that, with you, I was not following the steps my own teacher prescribed. He was a sorcerer and I should've properly plunged you into that world. I didn't, because I am no longer concerned with the ups and downs of my fellow men. Yet, my teacher's words stuck with me. I talked to you many times in the manner he himself would have talked.

"Genaro is a man of knowledge. The purest of them all. His actions are impeccable. He's beyond ordinary men, and beyond sorcer-

ers. His double is an expression of his joy and his humor. Thus, he cannot possibly use it to create or resolve ordinary situations. As far as I know, the double is the awareness of our state as luminous beings. It can do anything, and yet it chooses to be unobtrusive and gentle.

"It was my error to mislead you with borrowed words. My teacher was not capable of producing the effects Genaro does. For my teacher, unfortunately, certain things were, as they are for you, only tales of power."

I was compelled to defend my point. I said that I was speaking in a hypothetical sense.

"There is no hypothetical sense when you speak about the world of men of knowledge," he said. "A man of knowledge cannot possibly act towards his fellow men in injurious terms, hypothetically or otherwise."

"But, what if his fellow men are plotting against his security and well-being? Can he then use his double to protect himself?"

He clicked his tongue in disapproval.

"What incredible violence in your thoughts," he said. "No one can plot against the security and well-being of a man of knowledge. He *sees*, therefore he would take steps to avoid anything like that. Genaro, for example, has taken a calculated risk in joining you. But there is nothing that you could do to endanger his security. If there is anything, his *seeing* will let him know. Now, if there is something about you that is inherently injurious to him and his *seeing* cannot reach it, then it is his fate, and neither Genaro nor anyone else can avoid that. So, you see, a man of knowledge is in control without controlling anything."

We were quiet. The sun was about to reach the top of the heavy tall bushes on the west side of the house. There were about two hours of daylight left.

"Why don't you call Genaro?" don Juan said casually.

My body jumped. My initial reaction was to drop everything and run for my car. Don Juan broke into a belly laugh. I told him that I did not have to prove anything to myself, and that I was perfectly

content to talk to him. Don Juan could not stop laughing. Finally he said that it was a shame that don Genaro was not there to enjoy a great scene.

"Look, if you're not interested in calling Genaro, I am," he said in a resolute tone. "I like his company."

I had a terrible sour taste on the roof of my mouth. Beads of perspiration ran down from my brow and my upper lip. I wanted to say something but there was really nothing to say.

Don Juan gave me a long, scrutinizing look.

"Come on," he said. "A warrior is always ready. To be a warrior is not a simple matter of wishing to be one. It is rather an endless struggle that will go on to the very last moment of our lives. Nobody is born a warrior, in exactly the same way that nobody is born a reasonable being. We make ourselves into one or the other.

"Pull yourself together. I don't want Genaro to see you shivering like this."

He stood up and paced back and forth on the clean floor of the ramada. I could not remain impassive. My nervousness was so intense that I could not write any more and I jumped to my feet.

Don Juan made me jog on the spot, facing the west. He had made me perform the same movements before on various occasions. The idea was to draw "power" from the impending twilight by raising one's arms to the sky with the fingers stretched, like a fan, and then clasp them forcefully when the arms were in the mid point between the horizon and the zenith.

The exercise worked and I became almost instantly calm and collected. I could not avoid wondering, however, what had happened to the old "me" that could never have relaxed so completely by performing those simple and idiotic movements.

I wanted to focus all my attention on the procedure that don Juan was doubtlessly going to follow to call don Genaro. I anticipated some portentous acts. Don Juan stood on the edge of the ramada facing the southeast, cupped his hands around his mouth, and yelled, "Genaro! Come here!"

A moment later don Genaro emerged from the chaparral. Both of

them were beaming. They practically danced in front of me.

Don Genaro greeted me effusively and then sat down on the milk crate.

There was something dreadfully wrong with me. I was calm, unruffled. Some incredible state of indifference and aloofness had taken over my entire being. It was almost as if I were watching myself from a hiding place. In a very nonchalant manner I proceeded to tell don Genaro that during my last visit he had nearly scared me to death, and that not even during my experiences with psychotropic plants had I been in such a complete state of chaos. Both of them celebrated my statements as if they were meant to be funny. I laughed with them.

They obviously were aware of my state of emotional numbness. They watched me and humored me as if I were drunk.

There was something inside me that fought desperately to turn the situation into something familiar. I wanted to be concerned and afraid.

Don Juan finally splashed some water on my face and urged me to sit down and take notes. He said, as he had done before, that either I took notes or I died. The mere act of putting down some words brought back my familiar mood. It was as if something became crystal clear again, something that a moment before had been opaque and numb.

The advent of my usual self also meant the advent of my usual fears. Strangely enough I was less afraid of being afraid than of being unafraid. The familiarity of my old habits, no matter how unpleasant they were, was a delightful respite.

I fully realized then that don Genaro had just emerged from the chaparral. My usual processes were beginning to function. I started by refusing to think or speculate about the event. I made the resolution of not asking him anything. I was going to be a silent witness this time.

"Genaro has come again, exclusively for you," don Juan said.

Don Genaro was leaning against the wall of the house, resting his back against it while he sat on a tilted milk crate. He looked as if

he were riding on horseback. His hands were in front of him, giving the impression that he was holding the reins of a horse.

"That's right, Carlitos," he said and brought the milk crate to rest on the ground.

He dismounted, whirling his right leg over an imaginary neck of a horse, and then jumped to the ground. His movements were so perfectly executed that he gave me the unquestionable sensation that he had arrived on horseback. He came to my side and sat down to my left.

"Genaro has come because he wants to tell you about the other," don Juan said.

He made a gesture of giving don Genaro the floor. Don Genaro bowed. He turned slightly to face me. "What would you like to know, Carlitos?" he asked in a high-pitched voice.

"Well, if you're going to tell me about the double, tell me everything," I said, feigning casualness.

Both of them shook their heads and glanced at each other.

"Genaro is going to tell you about the dreamer and the dreamed," don Juan said.

"As you know, Carlitos," don Genaro said with the air of an orator warming up, "the double begins in *dreaming*."

He gave me a long look and smiled. His eyes swept from my face to my notebook and pencil.

"The double is a dream," he said, scratched his arms and then stood up.

He walked to the edge of the ramada and stepped out into the chaparral. He stood by a bush showing three fourths of his profile to us; he was apparently urinating. After a moment I noticed that there seemed to be something wrong with him. He appeared to be trying desperately to urinate but could not. Don Juan's laughter was the clue that don Genaro was clowning again. Don Genaro contorted his body in such a comical fashion that he had don Juan and me practically in hysterics.

Don Genaro came back to the ramada and sat down. His smile radiated a rare warmth.

"When you can't, you just can't," he said and shrugged his shoulders.

Then after a moment's pause he added, sighing, "Yes, Carlitos, the double is a dream."

"Do you mean that he's not real?" I asked.

"No. I mean that he is a dream," he retorted.

Don Juan intervened and explained that don Genaro was referring to the first emergence of the awareness that we are luminous beings.

"Each one of us is different, and thus the details of our struggles are different," don Juan said. "The steps that we follow to arrive at the double are the same, though. Especially the beginning steps, which are muddled and uncertain."

Don Genaro agreed and made a comment on the uncertainty that a sorcerer had at that stage.

"When it first happened to me, I didn't know it had happened," he explained. "One day I had been picking plants in the mountains. I had gone into a place that was worked by other herb collectors. I had two huge sacks of plants. I was ready to go home, but before I did I decided to take a moment's rest. I lay down on the side of the trail in the shade of a tree and I fell asleep. I heard then the sound of people coming down the hill and woke up. I hurriedly ran for cover and hid behind some bushes a short distance across the road from where I had fallen asleep. While I hid there I had the nagging impression I had forgotten something. I looked to see if I had my two sacks of plants. I didn't have them. I looked across the road to the place where I had been sleeping and I nearly dropped my pants with fright. I was still there asleep! It was me! I touched my body. I was myself! By that time the people that were coming down the hill were upon the me that was asleep, while the me that was fully awake looked helplessly from my hiding place. Damn it to hell! They were going to find me there and take my sacks away. But they went by me as if I were not there at all.

"My vision had been so vivid that I went wild. I screamed and then I woke up again. Damn it! It had been a dream!"

Don Genaro stopped his account and looked at me as if waiting for a question or a comment.

"Tell him where you woke up the second time," don Juan said.

"I woke up by the road," don Genaro said, "where I had fallen asleep. But for one moment I didn't quite know where I really was. I can almost say that I was still looking at myself waking up, then something pulled me to the side of the road and I found myself rubbing my eyes."

There was a long pause. I did not know what to say.

"And what did you do next?" don Juan asked.

I realized, when both of them began to laugh, that he was teasing me. He was imitating my questions.

Don Genaro went on talking. He said that he was stunned for a moment and then went to check everything.

"The place where I had hid was there exactly as I had seen it," he said. "And the people who had walked by me were down the road, a short distance away. I know it because I ran downhill after them. They were the same people I had seen. I followed them until they got to town. They must have thought I was mad. I asked them if they had seen my friend sleeping by the side of the road. They all said they hadn't."

"You see," don Juan said, "all of us go through the same doubts. We are afraid of being mad; unfortunately for us, of course, all of us are already mad."

"You are a tinge madder than us, though," don Genaro said to me and winked. "And more suspicious."

They teased me about my suspiciousness. And then don Genaro began to talk again.

"All of us are dense beings," he said. "You're not the only one, Carlitos. I was a bit shook up by my dream for a couple of days, but then I had to work for my living and take care of too many things and really had no time for pondering upon the mystery of my dreams. So I forgot about it in no time at all. I was very much like you.

"But one day, a few months later, after a terribly tiring day, I fell asleep like a log in midafternoon. It had just started to rain and a leak in the roof woke me up. I jumped out of bed and climbed on top of the house to fix the leak before it began to pour. I felt so fine and

strong that I finished in one minute and I didn't even get wet. I thought that the snooze I had taken had done me a lot of good. When I was through I went back into the house to get something to eat and I realized that I could not swallow. I thought I was sick. I mashed some roots and leaves and wrapped them around my neck and went to my bed. And then again when I got to my bed I nearly dropped my pants. I was there in bed asleep! I wanted to shake myself and wake me up, but I knew that that was not the thing one should do. So I ran out of the house. I was panic-stricken. I roamed around the hills aimlessly. I had no idea where I was going and although I had lived all my life there I got lost. I walked in the rain and didn't even feel it. It seemed that I couldn't think. Then the lightning and thunder became so intense that I woke up again."

He paused for a moment.

"Do you want to know where I woke up?" he asked me.

"Certainly," don Juan answered.

"I woke up in the hills in the rain," he said.

"But how did you know that you had woken up?" I asked.

"My body knew it," he replied.

"That was a stupid question," don Juan interjected. "You yourself know that something in the warrior is always aware of every change. It is precisely the aim of the warrior's way to foster and maintain that awareness. The warrior cleans it, shines it, and keeps it running."

He was right. I had to admit to them that I knew that there was something in me that registered and was aware of everything I did. And yet it had nothing to do with the ordinary awareness of myself. It was something else which I could not pin down. I told them that perhaps don Genaro could describe it better than I.

"You're doing very well yourself," don Genaro said. "It's an inner voice that tells you what's what. And at that time, it told me that I had woken up a second time. Of course, as soon as I woke up I became convinced that I must have been *dreaming*. Obviously it had not been an ordinary dream, but it hadn't been *dreaming* proper either. So I settled for something else: walking in my sleep, half awake, I suppose. I could not understand it in any other way."

Don Genaro said that his benefactor had explained to him that what he had gone through was not a dream at all, and that he should not insist on regarding it as walking in his sleep.

"What did he tell you that it was?" I asked.

They exchanged a glance.

"He told me it was the bogeyman," don Genaro replied, affecting the tone of a small child.

I explained to them that I wanted to know if don Genaro's benefactor explained things in the same way they themselves did.

"Of course he did," don Juan said.

"My benefactor explained that the dream in which one was watching oneself asleep," don Genaro went on, "was the time of the double. He recommended that rather than wasting my power in wondering and asking myself questions, I should use the opportunity to act, and that when I had another chance I should be prepared.

"My next chance took place at my benefactor's house. I was helping him with the housework. I had lain down to rest and as usual I fell sound asleep. His house was definitely a place of power for me and helped me. I was suddenly aroused by a loud noise and awakened. My benefactor's house was large. He was a wealthy man and had many people working for him. The noise seemed to be the sound of a shovel digging in gravel. I sat up to listen and then I stood up. The noise was very unsettling to me but I couldn't figure out why. I was pondering whether to go and check it out when I noticed that I was asleep on the floor. This time I knew what to expect and what to do and I followed the noise. I walked to the back of the house. There was no one there. The noise seemed to come from beyond the house. I kept on following it. The more I followed it the quicker I could move. I ended up at a distant place, witnessing incredible things."

He explained that at the time of those events he still was in the beginning stages of his apprenticeship and had done very little in the realm of "dreaming," but that he had an uncanny facility to dream that he was looking at himself.

"Where did you go, don Genaro?" I asked.

"That was the first time that I had really moved in *dreaming*," he

said. "I knew enough about it to behave correctly, though. I didn't look at anything directly and ended up in a deep ravine where my benefactor had some of his power plants."

"Do you think it works better if one knows very little about *dreaming*?" I asked.

"No!" don Juan interjected. "Each of us has a facility for something in particular. Genaro's knack is for *dreaming*."

"What did you see in the ravine, don Genaro?" I asked.

"I saw my benefactor doing some dangerous maneuvers with people. I thought I was there to help him and hid behind some trees. Yet I couldn't have known how to help. I was not dumb, though, and I realized that the scene was there for me to watch, not to act in."

"When and how and where did you wake up?"

"I don't know when I woke up. It must have been hours later. All I know is that I followed my benefactor and the other men, and when they were about to reach my benefactor's house the noise that they made, because they were arguing, woke me up. I was at the place where I had seen myself asleep.

"Upon waking up, I realized that whatever I had seen and done was not a dream. I had actually gone some distance away, guided by the sound."

"Was your benefactor aware of what you were doing?"

"Certainly. He had been making the noise with the shovel to help me accomplish my task. When he walked into the house he pretended to scold me for falling asleep. I knew that he had *seen* me. Later on, after his friends had left, he told me that he had noticed my glow hiding behind the trees."

Don Genaro said that those three instances set him off on the path of "dreaming," and that it took him fifteen years to have his next chance.

"The fourth time was a more bizarre and a more complete vision," he said. "I found myself asleep in the middle of a cultivated field. I saw myself lying there on my side sound asleep. I knew that it was *dreaming*, because I had set myself to do *dreaming* every night. Usually, every time I had seen myself asleep, I was at the site where I had gone to sleep. This time I was not in my bed, and I knew I had

gone to bed that night. In this *dreaming* it was daytime. So, I began to explore. I moved away from the place where I was lying and oriented myself. I knew where I was. I was actually not too far from my house, perhaps a couple of miles away. I walked around looking at every detail of the place. I stood in the shade of a big tree a short distance away and peered across a flat strip of land to some corn fields on the side of a hill. Something quite unusual struck me then; the details of the surroundings did not change or vanish no matter how long I peered at them. I got scared and ran back to where I was sleeping. I was still there exactly as I had been before. I began to watch myself. I had an eerie feeling of indifference towards the body I was watching.

"Then I heard the sound of people approaching. People always seemed to be around for me. I ran up ahead to a small hill and carefully watched from there. There were ten people coming to the field where I was. They were all young men. I ran back to where I was lying and went through one of the most agonizing times of my life, while I faced myself, lying there snoring like a pig. I knew that I had to awaken me but I had no idea how. I also knew that it was deadly for me to awaken myself. But if those young men were to find me there they were going to be very upset. All those deliberations that were going through my mind were not really thoughts. They were more appropriately scenes in front of my eyes. My worrying, for instance, was a scene in which I looked at myself while I had the sensation of being boxed in. I call that worrying. It has happened to me a number of times after that first time.

"Well, since I didn't know what to do I stood looking at myself, waiting for the worst. A bunch of fleeting images went past me in front of my eyes. I hung on to one in particular, the sight of my house and my bed. The image became very clear. Oh, how I wished to be back in my bed! Something shook me then; it felt like someone was hitting me and I woke up. I was on my bed! Obviously, I had been *dreaming*. I jumped out of bed and ran to the place of my *dreaming*. It was exactly as I had seen it. The young men were working there. I watched them for a long time. They were the same ones I had seen.

"I came back to the same place at the end of the day after everybody had gone and stood at the very spot where I had seen myself asleep. Someone had lain there. The weeds were crumpled."

Don Juan and don Genaro were observing me. They looked like two strange animals. I felt a shiver in my back. I was on the verge of indulging in the very rational fear that they were not really men like myself, but don Genaro laughed.

"In those days," he said, "I was just like you, Carlitos. I wanted to check everything. I was as suspicious as you are."

He paused, raised his finger and shook it at me. Then he faced don Juan.

"Weren't you as suspicious as this guy?" he asked.

"Not a chance," don Juan said. "He's the champ."

Don Genaro turned to me and made a gesture of apology.

"I think I was wrong," he said. "I was not as suspicious as you."

They chuckled softly as if they did not want to make noise. Don Juan's body convulsed with muffled laughter.

"This is a place of power for you," don Genaro said in a whisper. "You've written your fingers off right where you are sitting. Have you ever done some heavy *dreaming* here?"

"No, he hasn't," don Juan said in a low voice. "But he's done some heavy writing."

They doubled up. It seemed that they did not want to laugh out loud. Their bodies shook. Their soft laughter was like a rhythmical cackle.

Don Genaro sat up straight and slid closer to me. He patted me on the shoulder repeatedly, saying that I was a rascal, then he pulled my left arm with great force towards him. I lost my balance and fell forward. I almost hit my face on the hard ground. I automatically put my right arm in front and buffered my fall. One of them held me down by pressing on my neck. I was not sure who. The hand that was holding me felt like don Genaro's. I had a moment of devastating panic. I felt I was fainting, perhaps I did. The pressure in my stomach was so intense that I vomited. My next clear perception was that somebody was helping me to sit up. Don Genaro was squatting in

front of me. I turned around to look for don Juan. He was nowhere in sight. Don Genaro had a beaming smile. His eyes were shiny. They were looking fixedly at mine. I asked him what he had done to me and he said that I was in pieces. His tone was reproachful and he seemed to be annoyed or dissatisfied with me. He repeated various times that I was in pieces and that I had to come together again. He tried to feign a severe tone but he laughed in the middle of his harangue. He was telling me that it was just terrible that I was spread all over the place, and that he would have to use a broom to sweep all my pieces into one heap. Then he added that I might get the pieces in the wrong places and end up with my penis where my thumb should be. He cracked up at that point. I wanted to laugh and had a most unusual sensation. My body fell apart! It was as if I had been a mechanical toy that simply broke up into pieces. I had no physical feelings whatever, and neither had I any fear or concern. Coming apart was a scene that I witnessed from the point of view of the perceiver, and yet I did not perceive anything from a sensorial point of reference.

The next thing I became aware of was that don Genaro was manipulating my body. I then had a physical sensation, a vibration so intense that it made me lose sight of everything around me.

I felt once more that someone was helping me to sit up. I again saw don Genaro squatting in front of me. He pulled me up by my armpits and helped me walk around. I could not figure out where I was. I had the feeling I was in a dream, and yet I had a complete sense of sequential time. I was keenly aware that I had just been with don Genaro and don Juan in the ramada of don Juan's house.

Don Genaro walked with me, propping me by holding my left armpit. The scenery I was watching changed constantly. I could not determine, however, the nature of what I was observing. What was in front of my eyes was rather like a feeling or a mood; and the center from where all those changes radiated was definitely in my stomach. I had made that connection not as a thought or a realization but as a bodily sensation that suddenly became fixed and predominant. The fluctuations around me came from my stomach. I was creating a

world, an endless run of feelings and images. Everything I knew was there. That in itself was a feeling, not a thought or a conscious assessment.

I tried to keep tabs for a moment because of my nearly invincible habit of assessing everything, but at a certain instant my processes of bookkeeping ceased and a nameless something enveloped me, feelings and images of every sort.

At one point something in me began again the tabulation and I noticed that one image kept on repeating itself: don Juan and don Genaro, who were trying to reach me. The image was fleeting, it passed by me fast. It was something comparable to seeing them from the window of a fast-moving vehicle. They seemed to be trying to catch me as I went by. The image became clearer and it lasted longer as it kept on recurring. I consciously realized at one point that I was deliberately isolating it from among a myriad of other images. I sort of breezed through the rest to come to that particular scene. Finally I was capable of sustaining it by thinking about it. Once I had begun to think, my ordinary processes took over. They were not as defined as in my ordinary activities but clear enough to know that the scene or feeling I had isolated was that don Juan and don Genaro were in the ramada of don Juan's house and were holding me by the armpits. I wanted to keep on fleeing through other images and feelings, but they would not let me. I struggled for a moment. I felt bouncy and happy. I knew that I liked both of them and I also knew then that I was not afraid of them. I wanted to joke with them; I did not know how and I kept on laughing and patting them on their shoulders. I had another peculiar awareness. I was certain that I was "dreaming." If I focused my eyes on anything, it immediately became blurry.

Don Juan and don Genaro were talking to me. I could not keep their words straight and I could not distinguish which of them was talking. Don Juan then turned my body around and pointed to a lump on the ground. Don Genaro pulled me closer to it and made me go around it. The lump was a man lying on the ground. He was lying on his stomach, his face turned to his right. They kept on pointing out the man to me as they spoke. They pulled me and twisted me around him. I could not focus my eyes on him at all, but finally I had

a feeling of quietness and sobriety and I looked at the man. I had a slow awakening into the realization that the man lying on the ground was me. My realization did not bring any terror or discomfort. I simply accepted it without emotion. At that moment I was not completely asleep, but neither was I completely awake and in sober consciousness. I also became more aware of don Juan and don Genaro and could tell them apart when they talked to me. Don Juan said that we were going to go to the round power place in the chaparral. As soon as he said it the image of the place popped in my mind. I saw the dark masses of bushes around it. I turned to my right; don Juan and don Genaro were also there. I had a jolt and the feeling that I was afraid of them. Perhaps because they looked like two menacing shadows. They came closer to me. As soon as I saw their features my fears vanished. I liked them again. It was as if I were drunk and did not have a firm grip on anything. They grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me in unison. They ordered me to wake up. I could hear their voices clearly and separately. I had then a unique moment. I held two images in my mind, two dreams. I felt that something in me was deeply asleep and was waking up and I found myself lying on the floor of the ramada with don Juan and don Genaro shaking me. But I also was at the power place and don Juan and don Genaro were still shaking me. There was one crucial instant in which I was neither in one place nor the other, but I was rather in both places as an observer seeing two scenes at once. I had the incredible sensation that at that instant I could have gone either way. All I had to do at that moment was to change perspective and rather than watch either scene from the outside feel it from the point of view of the subject.

There was something very warm about don Juan's house. I preferred that scene.

I next had a terrifying seizure, so shocking that my entire ordinary awareness came back to me at once. Don Juan and don Genaro were pouring buckets of water on me. I was in the ramada of don Juan's house.

Hours later we sat in the kitchen. Don Juan had insisted that I had

to proceed as if nothing had happened. He gave me some food and said that I had to eat a great deal to compensate for my expenditure of energy.

It was after nine in the evening when I looked at my watch after we had sat down to eat. My experience had lasted several hours. From the point of view of my recollection, however, it seemed that I had just fallen asleep for a short while.

Even though I was completely myself, I still was numb. It was not until I had begun to write in my notebook that I regained my usual awareness. It was a surprise to me that taking notes could bring about instantaneous sobriety. The moment I was myself again a barrage of reasonable thoughts immediately came to my mind; they purported to explain the phenomenon I had experienced. I "knew" on the spot that don Genaro had hypnotized me the moment he pinned me down on the ground, but I did not attempt to figure out how he had done it.

They both laughed hysterically when I expressed my thoughts. Don Genaro examined my pencil and said that the pencil was the key to wind up my mainspring. I felt quite belligerent. I was tired and irritable. I found myself practically yelling at them while their bodies shook with laughter.

Don Juan said that it was permissible to miss the boat, but not by such a wide margin, and that don Genaro had come exclusively to help me and show me the mystery of the dreamer and the dreamed.

My irritability came to a peak. Don Juan signaled don Genaro with a movement of his head. Both of them stood and took me around the house. There don Genaro demonstrated his great repertoire of animal grunts and cries. He asked me to choose one and he taught me how to reproduce it.

After hours of practice I got to the point where I could imitate it quite well. The end result was that they themselves had enjoyed my clumsy attempts and laughed until they were practically weeping, and I had released my tension by reproducing the loud cry of an animal. I told them that there was something truly awesome in my imitation. The relaxation of my body was unequaled. Don Juan said that if I would perfect the cry I could turn it into an affair of power, or

I could simply use it to relieve my tension whenever I needed to. He suggested I should go to sleep. But I was afraid to fall asleep. I sat with them by the kitchen fire for a while and then, quite unintentionally, I fell into a deep sleep.

I woke up at dawn. Don Genaro was sleeping by the door. He seemingly woke up at the same time I did. They had covered me up and folded my jacket as a pillow. I felt very calm and rested. I commented to don Genaro that I had felt exhausted the night before. He said that so had he. He whispered as if he were confiding in me and told me that don Juan was even more exhausted because he was older.

"You and I are young," he said with a glint in his eyes. "But he's old. He must be about three hundred now."

I sat up hurriedly. Don Genaro covered his face with his blanket and roared with laughter. Don Juan came into the room at that moment.

I had a feeling of completeness and peace. For once, nothing really mattered. I was so at ease that I wanted to weep.

Don Juan said that the night before I had begun to be aware of my luminosity. He admonished me not to indulge in the sense of well-being I was having, because it would turn into complacency.

"At this moment," I said, "I don't want to explain anything. It doesn't matter what don Genaro did to me last night."

"I didn't do anything to you," don Genaro retorted. "Look, it's me, Genaro. Your Genaro! Touch me!"

I embraced don Genaro and we both laughed like two children.

He asked me if I thought it was strange that I could embrace him then when last time I had seen him there I had been unable to touch him. I assured him that those issues were no longer pertinent to me.

Don Juan's comment was that I was indulging in being broad-minded and good.

"Watch out!" he said. "A warrior never lets his guard down. If you keep on being so happy you're going to drain the little power you have left."

"What should I do?" I asked.

"Be yourself," he said. "Doubt everything. Be suspicious."

"But I don't like to be that way, don Juan."

"It is not a matter of whether you like it or not. What matters is, what can you use as a shield? A warrior must use everything available to him to close his mortal gap once it opens. So, it's of no importance that you really don't like to be suspicious or ask questions. That's your only shield now.

"Write, write. Or you'll die. To die with elation is a crappy way of dying."

"How should a warrior die, then?" don Genaro asked in exactly my own tone of voice.

"A warrior dies the hard way," don Juan said. "His death must struggle to take him. A warrior does not give himself to it."

Don Genaro opened his eyes to an enormous size and then blinked.

"What Genaro showed you yesterday is of utmost importance," don Juan went on. "You can't slough it off with piousness. Yesterday you told me that you had been driven wild with the idea of the double. But look at you now. You don't care any more. That's the trouble with people that go wild, they go wild both ways. Yesterday you were all questions, today you are all acceptance."

I pointed out that he always found a flaw in what I did, regardless of how I did it.

"That's not true!" he exclaimed. "There is no flaw in the warrior's way. Follow it and your acts cannot be criticized by anyone. Take yesterday as an example. The warrior's way would have been, first, to ask questions without fear and without suspicion and then let Genaro show you the mystery of the dreamer, without fighting him, or draining yourself. Today, the warrior's way would be to assemble what you've learned, without presumptuousness and without piousness. Do that and no one can find flaws in it."

I thought by his tone that don Juan must have been terribly annoyed with my blunderings. But he smiled at me and then giggled as if his own words had made him laugh.

I told him that I was just holding back, not wanting to burden them with my probes. I was indeed overwhelmed by what don Genaro had done. I had been convinced – although it no longer mat-

tered – that don Genaro had been waiting in the bushes for don Juan to call him. Then later on he had cashed in on my fright and used it to stun me. After being held forcibly on the ground, I must have undoubtedly passed out, and then don Genaro must have mesmerized me.

Don Juan argued that I was too strong to be subdued that easily.

"What took place then?" I asked him.

"Genaro came to see you to tell you something very exclusive," he said. "When he came out of the bushes, he was Genaro the double. There is another way to talk about this that would explain it better, but I can't use it now."

"Why not, don Juan?"

"Because you are not ready yet to talk about the totality of oneself. For the time being I can only say that this Genaro here is not the double now."

He pointed to don Genaro with a movement of his head. Don Genaro blinked repeatedly.

"The Genaro of last night was the double. And as I told you already, the double has inconceivable power. He showed you a most important issue. In order to do that he had to touch you. The double simply tapped you on the neck, on the same spot the ally walked over you years ago. Naturally, you went out like a light. And naturally too, you indulged like a son of a bitch. It took us hours to round you up. Thus, you dissipated your power and when the time came for you to accomplish a warrior's feat you did not have enough sap."

"What was that warrior's feat, don Juan?"

"I told you that Genaro came to show you something, the mystery of luminous beings as dreamers. You wanted to know about the double. It begins in dreams. But then you asked, 'What is the double?' And I said the double is the self. The self dreams the double. That should be simple, except that there is nothing simple about us. Perhaps the ordinary dreams of the self are simple, but that doesn't mean that the self is simple. Once it has learned to dream the double, the self arrives at this weird crossroad and a moment comes when one realizes that it is the double who dreams the self."

I had written down everything he had said. I had also paid attention to what he was saying but had failed to understand him.

Don Juan repeated his statements.

"The lesson last night, as I told you, was about the dreamer and the dreamed, or who dreams whom."

"I beg your pardon," I said.

Both of them broke into laughter.

"Last night," don Juan proceeded, "you almost chose to wake up at the power place."

"What do you mean, don Juan?"

"That would have been the feat. If you had not indulged in your stupid ways, you would have had enough power to tip the scales, and you would've, no doubt, scared yourself to death. Fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be, you did not have enough power. In fact, you wasted your power in worthless confusion to the point that you almost didn't have enough to survive.

"So, as you may very well understand, to indulge in your little quirks is not only stupid and wasteful but also injurious. A warrior that drains himself cannot live. The body is not an indestructible affair. You might have gotten gravely ill. You didn't, simply because Genaro and I deviated some of your crap."

The full impact of his words was beginning to take hold of me.

"Last night Genaro guided you through the intricacies of the double," don Juan went on. "Only he can do that for you. And it was not a vision or a hallucination when you saw yourself lying on the ground. You could have realized that with infinite clarity if you had not gotten lost in your indulging, and you could have known then that you yourself are a dream, that your double is dreaming you, in the same fashion that you dreamed him last night."

"But how can that be possible, don Juan?"

"No one knows how it happens. We only know that it does happen. That's the mystery of us as luminous beings. Last night you had two dreams and you could have awakened in either one, but you didn't have enough power even to understand that."

They looked at me fixedly for a moment.

"I think he understands," don Genaro said.

THE SECRET OF THE LUMINOUS BEINGS

Don Genaro delighted me for hours with some preposterous instructions on how to manage my daily world. Don Juan said that I should be very careful and serious-minded about the recommendations made by don Genaro because, although they were funny, they were not a joke.

Around noon don Genaro stood up and without saying a word walked into the bushes. I was also going to get up but don Juan gently held me down and in a solemn voice announced that don Genaro was going to try one more thing with me.

"What's he up to?" I asked. "What is he going to do to me?"

Don Juan assured me that I did not have to worry.

"You are approaching a crossroad," he said. "A certain crossroad that every warrior comes to."

I had the idea that he was talking about my death. He seemed to anticipate my question and signaled me not to say anything.

"We won't discuss this matter," he said. "Suffice it to say that the crossroad I'm referring to is the sorcerers' explanation. Genaro believes you're ready for it."

"When are you going to tell me about it?"

"I don't know when. You are the recipient, therefore it is up to you. You will have to decide when."

"What's wrong with right now?"

"To decide doesn't mean to choose an arbitrary time," he said. "To decide means that you have trimmed your spirit impeccably, and that you have done everything possible to be worthy of knowledge and power.

"Today, however, you must solve a little riddle for Genaro. He's

gone ahead of us and he'll be waiting somewhere in the chaparral. No one knows the spot where he'll be, or the specific time to go to him. If you're capable of determining the right time to leave the house, you will also be capable of guiding yourself to where he is."

I told don Juan that I could not imagine anyone being able to solve such a riddle.

"How can leaving the house at a specific time guide me to where don Genaro is?" I asked.

Don Juan smiled and began to hum a tune. He seemed to enjoy my agitation.

"That's the problem which Genaro has set up for you," he said. "If you have enough personal power you will decide with absolute certainty the right time to leave the house. How leaving at the precise time will guide you is something that no one knows. And yet, if you have enough power, you yourself will attest that this is so."

"But how am I going to be guided, don Juan?"

"No one knows that either."

"I think don Genaro is pulling my leg."

"You better watch out then," he said. "If Genaro is pulling your leg he's liable to yank it out."

Don Juan laughed at his own joke. I could not join him. My fear about the inherent danger of don Genaro's manipulations was too real.

"Can you give me some clues?" I asked.

"There are no clues!" he said cuttingly.

"Why does don Genaro want to do this?"

"He wants to test you," he replied. "Let's say that it is very important for him to know whether you can take the sorcerers' explanation. If you solve the riddle, the implication will be that you have stored enough personal power and you're ready. But if you flub it, it'll be because you don't have enough power and in that case the sorcerers' explanation won't make any sense to you. I think that we should give you the explanation regardless of whether you understand it or not; that's my idea. Genaro is a more conservative warrior; he wants things in their proper order and he won't give in until he thinks you're ready."

"Why don't you just tell me about the sorcerers' explanation yourself?"

"Because Genaro must be the one who helps you."

"Why is that so, don Juan?"

"Genaro doesn't want me to tell you why," he said. "Not yet."

"Would it hurt me to know the sorcerers' explanation?" I asked.

"I don't think so."

"Please, don Juan, tell me then."

"You must be joking. Genaro has precise ideas on this matter and we must honor and respect them."

He made an imperative gesture to quiet me.

After a long unnerving pause I ventured a question."But how can I solve this riddle, don Juan?"

"I really don't know that, thus I can't advise you what to do," he said. "Genaro is most efficient. He designed the riddle just for you. Since he's doing this for your benefit, he's attuned to you alone, therefore only you can pick the precise time to leave the house. He will call you himself and guide you by means of his call."

"What will his call be like?"

"I don't know. His call is for you, not for me. He'll be tapping your *will* directly. In other words, you must use your *will* in order to know the call.

"Genaro feels that he must make sure, at this point, that you have stored sufficient personal power to enable you to turn your *will* into a functioning unit."

"Will" was another concept which don Juan had delineated with great care but without making it clear. I had gathered from his explanations that "will" was a force that emanated from the umbilical region through an unseen opening below the navel, an opening he had called the "gap." "Will" was allegedly cultivated only by sorcerers. It came to the practitioners veiled in mystery and purportedly gave them the capacity to perform extraordinary acts.

I remarked to don Juan that there was no chance that anything so vague could ever be a functioning unit in my life.

"That's where you're wrong," he said. "The *will* develops in a warrior in spite of every opposition of the reason."

"Can't don Genaro, being a sorcerer, know whether I'm ready or not, without testing me?" I asked.

"He certainly can," he said. "But that knowledge won't be of any value or consequence, because it has nothing to do with you. You are the one who's learning, therefore you yourself must claim knowledge as power, not Genaro. Genaro is not concerned with his knowing as much as with your knowing. You must find out whether or not your *will* works. This is a very difficult point to make. In spite of what Genaro or I know about you, you must prove to yourself that you are in the position to claim knowledge as power. In other words, you yourself have to be convinced that you can exercise your *will*. If you're not, then you must become convinced today. If you cannot perform this task, then Genaro's conclusion will be that regardless of what he might *see* about you, you're not ready yet."

I experienced an overwhelming apprehension.

"Is all this necessary?" I asked.

"It's Genaro's request and must be obeyed," he said in a firm but friendly tone.

"But what does don Genaro have to do with me?"

"You may find that out today," he said and smiled.

I pleaded with don Juan to get me out of that intolerable situation and explain all the mysterious talk. He laughed and patted my chest and made a joke about a Mexican weight lifter who had enormous pectoral muscles but could not do heavy physical labor because his back was weak.

"Watch those muscles," he said. "They shouldn't be just for show."

"My muscles have nothing to do with what you're talking about," I said in a belligerent mood.

"They do," he replied. "The body must be perfection before the *will* is a functioning unit."

Don Juan had again deviated the direction of my probing. I felt restless and frustrated.

I stood up and went to the kitchen and drank some water. Don Juan followed me and suggested that I should practice the animal cry that don Genaro had taught me. We walked to the side of the house;

I sat on a pile of wood and involved myself in reproducing it. Don Juan made some corrections and gave me some pointers about my breathing; the end result was a state of complete physical relaxation.

We returned to the ramada and sat down again. I told him that sometimes I felt irked with myself because I was so helpless.

"There is nothing wrong with the feeling of being helpless," he said. "All of us are most familiar with it. Remember that we have spent an eternity as helpless infants. I have already told you that at this very moment you are like an infant who can't get out of the crib by himself, much less act on his own. Genaro gets you out of your crib, let's say, by picking you up. But an infant wants to act and since he can't, he complains. There is nothing wrong with that, but to indulge in protesting and complaining is another matter."

He demanded that I keep myself relaxed; he suggested that I ask him questions for a while, until I was in a better frame of mind.

For a moment I was at a loss and could not decide what to ask.

Don Juan unrolled a straw mat and told me to sit on it. Then he filled a large gourd with water and put it in a carrying net. He seemed to be preparing for a journey. He sat down again and urged me with a movement of his eyebrows to begin my questions.

I asked him to tell me more about the moth.

He gave me a long scrutinizing look and chuckled.

"That was an ally," he said. "You know that."

"But what actually is an ally, don Juan?"

"There is no way of saying what exactly an ally is, just as there is no way of saying what exactly a tree is."

"A tree is a living organism," I said.

"That doesn't tell me much," he said. "I can also say that an ally is a force, a tension. I've told you that already, but that doesn't say much about an ally.

"Just like in the case of a tree, the only way to know what an ally is, is by experiencing it. Over the years I have struggled to prepare you for the momentous encounter with an ally. You may not realize this, but it took you years of preparation to meet tree. To meet ally is no different. A teacher must acquaint his disciple with ally little by little, piece by piece. You have, over the course of the years, stored a

great amount of knowledge about it and now you are capable of putting that knowledge together to experience ally the way you experience tree."

"I have no idea that I'm doing that, don Juan."

"Your reason is not aware of it, because it cannot accept the possibility of ally to begin with. Fortunately, it is not the reason which puts ally together. It is the body. You have perceived ally in many degrees and on many occasions. Each of those perceptions was stored in your body. The sum of those pieces is the ally. I don't know any other way of describing it."

I said that I could not conceive that my body was acting by itself as if it were an entity separate from my reason.

"It isn't, but we have made it so," he said. "Our reason is petty and it is always at odds with our body. This, of course, is only a way of talking, but the triumph of a man of knowledge is that he has joined the two together. Since you're not a man of knowledge, your body does things now that your reason cannot comprehend. The ally is one of those things. You were not mad, neither were you dreaming when you perceived the ally that night, right here."

I asked him about the frightening idea, which he and don Genaro had implanted in me, that the ally was an entity waiting for me at the edge of a small valley in the mountains of northern Mexico. They had told me that sooner or later I had to keep my appointment with the ally and wrestle with it.

"Those are ways of talking about mysteries for which there are no words," he said. "Genaro and I said that at the edge of that plain the ally was waiting for you. That statement was true, but it doesn't have the meaning that you want to give it. The ally is waiting for you, that's for sure, but it is not at the edge of any plain. It is right here, or there, or in any other place. The ally is waiting for you, just like death is waiting for you, everywhere and nowhere."

"Why is the ally waiting for me?"

"For the same reason that death waits for you," he said, "because you were born. There is no possibility of explaining at this point what is meant by that. You must first experience the ally. You must perceive it in its full force, then the sorcerers' explanation may throw

light upon it. So far you've had enough power to clarify at least one point, that the ally is a moth.

"Some years ago you and I went to the mountains and you had a bout with something. I had no way of telling you then what was taking place; you saw a strange shadow flying back and forth in front of the fire. You yourself said that it looked like a moth; although you didn't know what you were talking about, you were absolutely correct, the shadow was a moth. Then, on another occasion, something frightened you out of your wits, after you had fallen asleep, again in front of a fire. I had warned you not to fall asleep, but you disregarded my warning; that act left you at the mercy of the ally and the moth stepped on your neck. Why you survived will always be a mystery to me. You didn't know then but I had given you up for dead. Your blunder was that serious.

"From then on every time we've been in the mountains or in the desert, even if you didn't notice it, the moth always followed us. All in all then, we can say that for you the ally is a moth. But I cannot say that it is really a moth, the way we know moths. Calling the ally a moth is again only a way of talking, a way of making that immensity out there understandable."

"Is the ally a moth for you too?" I asked.

"No. The way one understands the ally is a personal matter," he said.

I mentioned that we were back where we had started; he had not told me what an ally really was.

"There's no need to be confused," he said. "Confusion is a mood one enters into, but one can also get out of it. At this point there is no way of clarifying anything. Perhaps later on today we'll be able to consider these matters in detail; it's up to you. Or rather, it's up to your personal power."

He refused to say one more word. I became quite upset with the fear that I was going to fail the test. Don Juan took me to the back of his house and made me sit on a straw mat at the edge of an irrigation ditch. The water moved so slowly that it almost seemed stagnant. He commanded me to sit quietly, shut off my internal dialogue and look at the water. He said that years before he had discovered that I had a

certain affinity for bodies of water, a feeling that was most convenient for the endeavors I was involved in. I remarked that I was not particularly fond of bodies of water, but neither did I dislike them. He said that that was precisely why water was beneficial for me, I was indifferent towards it. Under conditions of stress water could not trap me, but neither could it reject me.

He sat slightly behind me to my right and admonished me to let go and not be afraid, because he was there to help me if there was any need.

I had a moment of fear. I looked at him, waiting for further instructions. He forcibly turned my head towards the water and ordered me to proceed. I had no idea what he wanted me to do so I simply relaxed. As I looked at the water I caught sight of the reeds on the opposite side. Unconsciously I rested my unfocused eyes on them. The slow current made them quiver. The water had the color of the desert dirt. I noticed that the ripples around the reeds looked like furrows or crevices on a smooth surface. At one instant the reeds became gigantic, the water was a smooth flat ocher surface, and then in a matter of seconds I was sound asleep; or perhaps I entered into a perceptual state for which I had no parallel. The closest way of describing it would be to say that I went to sleep and had a portentous dream.

I felt that I could have gone on with it indefinitely if I had wanted to, but I deliberately ended it by engaging myself in a conscious self-dialogue. I opened my eyes. I was lying on the straw mat. Don Juan was a few feet away. My dream had been so magnificent that I began to recount it to him. He signaled me to be quiet. With a long twig he pointed to two long shadows that some dry branches of desert chaparral cast on the ground. The tip of his twig followed the outline of one of the shadows as if it were drawing it, then it jumped to the other and did the same with it; the shadows were about a foot long and over an inch wide; they were from five to six inches apart from each other. The movement of the twig forced my eyes out of focus and I found myself looking with crossed eyes at four long shadows; suddenly the two shadows in the middle merged into one and created an extraordinary perception of depth. There was some

inexplicable roundness and volume in the shadow thus formed. It was almost like a transparent tube, a round bar of some unknown substance. I knew that my eyes were crossed and yet they seemed to be focused on one spot; the view there was crystal clear. I could move my eyes without dispelling the image.

I continued watching but without letting my guard down. I experienced a curious compulsion to let go and immerse myself in the scene. Something in what I was observing seemed to pull me; but something in myself surfaced and I began a semiconscious dialogue; almost instantly I became aware of my surroundings in the world of everyday life.

Don Juan was watching me. He appeared to be puzzled. I asked him if there was something wrong. He did not answer. He helped me to sit up. It was only then that I realized that I had been lying on my back, looking at the sky, and don Juan had been leaning over my face.

My first impulse was to tell him that I had actually seen the shadows on the ground while I had been looking at the sky, but he put his hand over my mouth. We sat in silence for a while. I had no thoughts. I experienced an exquisite sense of peace, and then quite abruptly I had an unyielding urge to get up and go into the chaparral to look for don Genaro.

I made an attempt to speak to don Juan; he jutted his chin and twisted his lips as a silent command not to talk. I tried to assess my predicament in a rational manner; I was enjoying my silence so much, however, that I did not want to bother with logical considerations.

After a moment's pause, I again felt the imperious need to walk into the bushes. I followed a trail. Don Juan tagged along behind me as if I were the leader.

We walked for about an hour. I succeeded in remaining without any thoughts. Then we came to a hillside. Don Genaro was there, sitting near the top of a rock wall. He greeted me effusively and had to yell his words; he was about fifty feet above the ground. Don Juan made me sit down and then sat next to me.

Don Genaro explained that I had found the place where he had been waiting because he had guided me with a sound he had been

making. As he voiced his words, I realized that I had indeed been hearing a peculiar sound I thought to be a buzzing in my ears; it had seemed to be more of an internal affair, a bodily condition, a feeling of sound so undetermined that it was beyond the realm of conscious assessment and interpretation.

I believed that don Genaro had a small instrument in his left hand. From where I sat I could not distinguish it clearly. It looked like a jew's-harp; with it he produced a soft eerie sound which was practically indiscernible. He kept on playing it for a moment, as if allowing me time to fully realize what he had just said. Then he showed me his left hand. There was nothing in it; he was not holding any instrument. It had appeared to me that he was playing some instrument because of the manner in which he had put his hand to his mouth; actually, the sound was being produced with his lips and the edge of his left hand, between the thumb and index finger.

I turned to don Juan to explain to him that I had been fooled by don Genaro's movements. He made a quick gesture and told me not to talk and to pay close attention to what don Genaro was doing. I turned back to look at don Genaro, but he was no longer there. I thought that he must have climbed down. I waited a few moments for him to emerge from behind the bushes. The rock he had been standing on was a peculiar formation; it was more like a huge ledge on the side of a larger rock wall. I must have taken my eyes away from him for only a couple of seconds. If he had climbed up I would have caught sight of him before he had reached the top of the rock wall, and if he had climbed down he would also have been visible from where I was sitting.

I asked don Juan about don Genaro's whereabouts. He replied that he still was standing on the rock ledge. As far as I could judge, there was no one there, but don Juan maintained over and over again that don Genaro was still standing on the rock.

He did not seem to be joking. His eyes were steady and fierce. He said in a cutting tone that my senses were not the proper avenue to appraise what don Genaro was doing. He ordered me to shut off my internal dialogue. I struggled for a moment and began to close my eyes. Don Juan lurched at me and shook me by the shoulders. He

whispered that I had to keep my view on the rock ledge.

I had a sensation of drowsiness and heard don Juan's words as if they were coming from far away. I automatically looked at the ledge. Don Genaro was there again. That did not interest me. I noticed semiconsciously that it was very difficult for me to breathe, but before I could have a thought about it, don Genaro jumped to the ground. That act did not catch my interest either. He came over to me and helped me stand up, holding me by the arm; don Juan held my other arm. They propped me up between the two of them. Then it was only don Genaro who was helping me walk. He whispered something in my ear that I could not understand and suddenly I felt that he had pulled my body in some strange way; he grabbed me, in a manner of speaking, by the skin of my stomach and pulled me up to the ledge, or perhaps onto another rock. I knew that for an instant I was on a rock. I could have sworn that it was the rock ledge; the image was so fleeting, however, that I could not evaluate it in detail. Then I felt that something in me faltered and I fell backwards. I had a faint feeling of anguish or perhaps physical discomfort. The next thing I knew don Juan was talking to me. I could not understand him. I concentrated my attention on his lips. The sensation I had was dreamlike; I was trying to rip from the inside an enveloping filmlike sheet that encased me, while don Juan tried to rip it from the outside. Finally, it actually popped and don Juan's words became audible and their meaning crystal clear. He was commanding me to surface by myself. I struggled desperately to gain my sobriety; I had no success. I quite consciously wondered why I was having so much trouble. I fought to talk to myself.

Don Juan seemed to be aware of my difficulty. He urged me to try harder. Something out there was preventing me from engaging myself in my familiar internal dialogue. It was as if a strange force were making me drowsy and indifferent.

I fought against it until I began to lose my breath. I heard don Juan talking to me. My body contorted involuntarily with the tension. I felt as if I were embraced and locked in mortal combat with something that was keeping me from breathing. I did not have fear, but rather some uncontrollable fury possessed me. My wrath

mounted to such heights that I growled and screamed like an animal. Then my body was taken by a seizure; I had a jolt that stopped me instantly. I could again breathe normally and then I realized that don Juan had poured his gourd of water over my stomach and neck, soaking me.

He helped me sit up. Don Genaro was standing on the ledge. He called my name and then jumped to the ground. I saw him plummeting down from a height of fifty feet or so and I experienced an unbearable sensation around my umbilical region; I had had the same sensation in dreams of falling.

Don Genaro came to me and asked me, smiling, if I had liked his leap. I tried unsuccessfully to say something. Don Genaro called my name again.

"Carlitos! Watch me!" he said.

He swung his arms at his sides four or five times as if to get momentum and then jumped out of sight, or I thought he did. Or perhaps he did something else for which I had no description. He was five or six feet away from me and then he vanished as if he had been sucked away by an uncontrollable force.

I felt aloof and tired. I had a sense of indifference and did not want to think or talk to myself. I was not afraid, but inexplicably sad. I wanted to weep. Don Juan hit me repeatedly with his knuckles on the top of my head and laughed as if everything that had happened were a joke. He then demanded that I talk to myself because that was the time when the internal dialogue was desperately needed. I heard him ordering me, "Talk! Talk."

I had an involuntary spasm in the muscles of my lips. My mouth moved without sounds. I remembered don Genaro moving his mouth in a similar way when he was clowning and I wished I could have said, as he had, "My mouth doesn't want to talk." I tried to voice the words and my lips contorted in a painful way. Don Juan seemed to be on the verge of collapsing with laughter. His enjoyment was contagious and I also laughed. Finally, he helped me to stand up. I asked him if don Genaro was coming back. He said that don Genaro had had enough of me for the day.

* * *

"You almost made it," don Juan said.

We had been sitting near the fire in the earth stove. He had insisted that I eat. I was not hungry, or tired. An unusual melancholy had overtaken me; I felt removed from all the events of the day. Don Juan handed me my writing pad. I made a supreme effort to recapture my usual state. I jotted down some comments. Little by little, I brought myself back into my old pattern. It was as if a veil were being lifted; suddenly I was again involved in my familiar attitude of interest and bewilderment.

"Good, good," don Juan said, patting my head. "I've told you that the true art of a warrior is to balance terror and wonder."

Don Juan's mood was unusual. He seemed almost nervous, anxious. He appeared to be willing to speak on his own accord. I believed that he was preparing me for the sorcerers' explanation and I became quite anxious myself. His eyes had a strange glimmer that I had seen only a few times before. After I told him what I thought of his unusual attitude he said that he was happy for me, that as a warrior he could rejoice in the triumphs of his fellow men, if they were triumphs of the spirit. He added that unfortunately I was not yet ready for the sorcerers' explanation, in spite of the fact that I had successfully solved don Genaro's riddle. His contention was that when he had poured water over my body I had actually been dying and my whole achievement had been canceled out by my incapacity to fend off the last of don Genaro's onslaughts.

"Genaro's power was like a tide that engulfed you," he said.

"Did don Genaro want to hurt me?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Genaro wants to help you. But power can be met only with power. He was testing you and you failed."

"But I solved his riddle, didn't I?"

"You did fine," he said. "So fine that Genaro had to believe that you were capable of a complete warrior's feat. You almost made it. What floored you this time was not indulging, though."

"What was it then?"

"You're too impatient and violent; instead of relaxing and going with Genaro you began to fight him. You can't win against him; he's stronger than you."

Don Juan then volunteered some advice and suggestions about my personal relations with people. His remarks were a serious sequel to what don Genaro had jokingly said to me earlier. He was in a talkative mood and without any coaxing on my part he began to explain what had taken place during the last two times I had been there.

"As you know," he said, "the crux of sorcery is the internal dialogue; that is the key to everything. When a warrior learns to stop it, everything becomes possible; the most farfetched schemes become attainable. The passageway to all the weird and eerie experiences that you have had recently was the fact that you could stop talking to yourself. You have, in complete sobriety, witnessed the ally, Genaro's double, the dreamer and the dreamed, and today you almost learned about the totality of yourself; that was the warrior's feat that Genaro expected you to perform. All this has been possible because of the amount of personal power that you have stored. It started the last time you were here when I caught sight of a very auspicious omen. As you arrived I heard the ally prowling around; first, I heard its soft steps and then I *saw* the moth looking at you as you got out of your car. The ally was motionless, watching you. That to me was the best omen. Had the ally been agitated, moving around as if it was displeased with your presence, the way it always has been, the course of the events would have been different. Many times I have caught sight of the ally in an unfriendly state towards you, but this time the omen was right and I knew that the ally had a piece of knowledge for you. That was the reason why I said that you had an appointment with knowledge, an appointment with a moth that had been pending for a long time. For reasons inconceivable to us the ally selected the form of a moth to manifest itself to you."

"But you said that the ally was formless, and that one could only judge its effects," I said.

"That is right," he said. "But the ally is a moth for the onlookers who are associated with you — Genaro and myself. For you, the ally is only an effect, a sensation in your body, or a sound, or the golden specks of knowledge. It remains as a fact, nonetheless, that by choosing the form of a moth, the ally is telling Genaro and me something of great importance. Moths are the givers of knowledge and the

friends and helpers of sorcerers. It is because the ally chose to be a moth around you that Genaro places such a great emphasis on you.

"That night that you met the moth, as I had anticipated, was a true appointment with knowledge for you. You learned the moth's call, felt the gold dust of its wings, but above all, that night for the first time, you were aware that you *saw* and your body learned that we are luminous beings. You have not yet assessed correctly that monumental event in your life. Genaro demonstrated for you with tremendous force and clarity that we are a feeling and that what we call our body is a cluster of luminous fibers that have awareness.

"Last night you were back again under the good auspices of the ally. I came to look at you as you arrived and I knew that I had to call Genaro so he could explain to you the mystery of the dreamer and the dreamed. You believed then, just as you always have, that I was tricking you; but Genaro was not hiding in the bushes as you thought. He came over for you, even if your reason refuses to believe it."

That part of don Juan's elucidation was indeed the hardest to take at its face value. I could not admit it. I said that don Genaro had been real and of this world.

"Everything that you've witnessed so far has been real and of this world," he said. "There is no other world. Your stumbling block is a peculiar insistence on your part and that peculiarity of yours is not going to be cured by explanations. So today Genaro addressed himself directly to your body. A careful examination of what you did today will reveal to you that your body put things together in a most praiseworthy manner. Somehow, you refrained from indulging in your visions at the irrigation ditch. You kept a rare control and aloofness as warriors should; you didn't believe anything, but you still acted efficiently and thus you were capable of following Genaro's call. You actually found him without any aid from me.

"When we arrived at the rock ledge, you were imbued with power and you saw Genaro standing where other sorcerers have stood, for similar reasons. He walked over to you after jumping from the ledge. He himself was all power. Had you proceeded as you did earlier by the irrigation ditch, you would've *seen* him as he really is, a luminous

being. Instead, you got frightened, especially when Genaro made you leap. That leap in itself should have been sufficient to transport you beyond your boundaries. But you didn't have the strength and fell back into the world of your reason. Then, of course, you entered into mortal combat with yourself. Something in you, your *will*, wanted to go with Genaro, while your reason opposed him. Had I not helped you, you now would be lying dead and buried in that power place. But even with my help the outcome was dubious for a moment."

We were silent for a few minutes. I waited for him to speak. Finally I asked, "Did don Genaro make me leap up to the rock ledge?"

"Don't take that leap in the sense that you understand a leap," he said. "Once again, this is only a way of speaking. As long as you think that you are a solid body you cannot conceive what I am talking about."

He then spilled some ashes on the ground by the lantern, covering an area about two feet square, and drew a diagram with his fingers, a diagram that had eight points interconnected with lines. It was a geometrical figure.

He had drawn a similar one years before when he tried to explain to me that it was not an illusion that I had observed the same leaf falling four times from the same tree.

The diagram in the ashes had two epicenters; one he called "reason," the other, "will." "Reason" was interconnected directly with a point he called "talking." Through "talking," "reason" was indirectly connected to three other points, "feeling," "dreaming" and "seeing." The other epicenter, "will," was directly connected to "feeling," "dreaming" and "seeing"; but only indirectly to "reason" and "talking."

I remarked that the diagram was different from the one I had recorded years before.

"The outer form is of no importance," he said. "These points represent a human being and can be drawn in any way you want."

"Do they represent the body of a human being?" I asked.

"Don't call it the body," he said. "These are eight points on the fibers of a luminous being. A sorcerer says, as you can see in the

diagram, that a human being is, first of all, *will*, because *will* is directly connected to three points, *feeling*, *dreaming* and *seeing*; then next, a human being is *reason*. This is properly a center that is smaller than *will*; it is connected only with *talking*."

"What are the other two points, don Juan?"

He looked at me and smiled.

"You're a lot stronger now than you were the first time we talked about this diagram," he said. "But you're not yet strong enough to know all the eight points. Genaro will someday show you the other two."

"Does everybody have those eight points or only sorcerers?"

"We may say that every one of us brings to the world eight points. Two of them, *reason* and *talking*, are known by everyone. *Feeling* is always vague but somehow familiar. But only in the world of sorcerers does one get fully acquainted with *dreaming*, *seeing* and *will*. And finally, at the outer edge of that world one encounters the other two. The eight points make the totality of oneself."

He showed me in the diagram that in essence all the points could be made to connect with one another indirectly.

I asked him again about the two mysterious remaining points. He showed me that they were connected only to "will" and that they were removed from "feeling," "dreaming" and "seeing," and much more distant from "talking" and "reason." He pointed with his finger to show that they were isolated from the rest and from each other.

"Those two points will never yield to *talking* or to *reason*," he said. "Only *will* can handle them. *Reason* is so removed from them that it is utterly useless to try figuring them out. This is one of the hardest things to realize; after all, the forte of *reason* is to reason out everything."

I asked him if the eight points corresponded to areas or to certain organs in a human being.

"They do," he replied dryly and erased the diagram.

He touched my head and said that that was the center of "reason" and "talking." The tip of my sternum was the center of "feeling." The area below the navel was "will." "Dreaming" was on the right side against the ribs. "Seeing" on the left. He said that sometimes in

some warriors "seeing" and "dreaming" were on the right side.

"Where are the other two points?" I asked.

He gave me a most obscene answer and broke into a belly laugh.

"You're so sneaky," he said. "You think I'm a sleepy old goat, don't you?"

I explained to him that my questions created their own momentum.

"Don't try to hurry," he said. "You'll know in due time and then you will be on your own, by yourself."

"Do you mean that I won't see you any more, don Juan?"

"Not ever again," he said. "Genaro and I will be then what we always have been, dust on the road."

I had a jolt in the pit of my stomach.

"What are you saying, don Juan?"

"I'm saying that we all are unfathomable beings, luminous and boundless. You, Genaro and I are stuck together by a purpose that is not our decision."

"What purpose are you talking about?"

"Learning the warrior's way. You can't get out of it, but neither can we. As long as our achievement is pending you will find me or Genaro, but once it is accomplished, you will fly freely and no one knows where the force of your life will take you."

"What is don Genaro doing in this?"

"That subject is not in your realm yet," he said. "Today I have to pound the nail that Genaro put in, the fact that we are luminous beings. We are perceivers. We are an awareness; we are not objects; we have no solidity. We are boundless. The world of objects and solidity is a way of making our passage on earth convenient. It is only a description that was created to help us. We, or rather our *reason*, forget that the description is only a description and thus we entrap the totality of ourselves in a vicious circle from which we rarely emerge in our lifetime.

"At this moment, for instance, you are involved in extricating yourself from the snarls of *reason*. It is preposterous and unthinkable for you that Genaro just appeared at the edge of the chaparral, and yet you cannot deny that you witnessed it. You perceived it as such."

Don Juan chuckled. He carefully drew another diagram in the ashes and covered it with his hat before I could copy it.

"We are perceivers," he proceeded. "The world that we perceive, though, is an illusion. It was created by a description that was told to us since the moment we were born.

"We, the luminous beings, are born with two rings of power, but we use only one to create the world. That ring, which is hooked very soon after we are born, is *reason*, and its companion is *talking*. Between the two they concoct and maintain the world.

"So, in essence, the world that your *reason* wants to sustain is the world created by a description and its dogmatic and inviolable rules, which the *reason* learns to accept and defend.

"The secret of the luminous beings is that they have another ring of power which is never used, the *will*. The trick of the sorcerer is the same trick of the average man. Both have a description; one, the average man, upholds it with his *reason*; the other, the sorcerer, upholds it with his *will*. Both descriptions have their rules and the rules are perceivable, but the advantage of the sorcerer is that *will* is more engulfing than *reason*.

"The suggestion that I want to make at this point is that from now on you should let yourself perceive whether the description is upheld by your *reason* or by your *will*. I feel that is the only way for you to use your daily world as a challenge and a vehicle to accumulate enough personal power in order to get to the totality of yourself.

"Perhaps the next time that you come you'll have enough of it. At any rate, wait until you feel, like you felt today at the irrigation ditch, that an inner voice is telling you to do so. If you come in any other spirit it'll be a waste of time and a danger to you."

I remarked that if I had to wait for that inner voice I would never see them again.

"You'd be surprised how well one can perform if one is against the wall," he said.

He stood up and picked up a bundle of firewood. He placed some dry sticks on the earth stove. The flames cast a yellowish glow on the ground. He then turned off the lantern and squatted in front of his

hat, which was covering the drawing he had made in the ashes.

He commanded me to sit calmly, shut off my internal dialogue, and keep my eyes on his hat. I struggled for a few moments and then I felt a sensation of floating, of falling off a cliff. It was as if nothing were supporting me, as if I were not sitting or did not have a body.

Don Juan lifted his hat. Underneath there were spirals of ashes. I watched them without thinking. I felt the spirals moving. I felt them in my stomach. The ashes seemed to pile up. Then they were stirred and fluffed and suddenly don Genaro was sitting in front of me.

The sight forced me instantly into my internal dialogue. I thought that I must have fallen asleep. I began to breathe in short gasps and tried to open my eyes, but my eyes were open.

I heard don Juan telling me to get up and move around. I jumped up and ran to the ramada. Don Juan and don Genaro ran after me. Don Juan brought his lantern. I could not catch my breath. I tried to calm myself as I had done before, by jogging in place while I faced the west. I lifted my arms and began breathing. Don Juan came to my side and said that those movements were done only in the twilight.

Don Genaro yelled that it was twilight for me and both of them began to laugh. Don Genaro ran to the edge of the bushes and then bounced back to the ramada, as if he had been attached to a giant rubber band that made him snap back. He repeated the same movement three or four times and then came to my side. Don Juan had been looking at me fixedly, giggling like a child.

They exchanged a furtive glance. Don Juan said to don Genaro in a loud voice that my reason was dangerous, and that it could kill me if it was not placated.

"For heaven's sake!" don Genaro exclaimed in a roaring voice. "Placate his reason!"

They jumped up and down and laughed like two children.

Don Juan made me sit down underneath the lantern and handed me my notebook.

"Tonight we're really pulling your leg," he said in a conciliatory tone. "Don't be afraid. Genaro was hiding under my hat."

PART TWO

The Tonal and the Nagual

HAVING TO BELIEVE

I walked towards downtown on the Paseo de la Reforma. I was tired; the altitude of Mexico City no doubt had something to do with it. I could have taken a bus or a taxi, but somehow in spite of my fatigue I wanted to walk. It was Sunday afternoon. The traffic was minimal and yet the exhaust fumes of the buses and trucks with diesel engines made the narrow streets of downtown seem like canyons of smog.

I arrived at the Zocalo and noticed that the cathedral of Mexico City seemed to be more slanted than the last time I had seen it. I stepped a few feet inside the enormous halls. A cynical thought crossed my mind.

From there I headed for the Lagunilla market. I had no definite purpose in mind. I walked aimlessly but at a good pace, without looking at anything in particular. I ended up at the stands of old coins and secondhand books.

"Hello, hello! Look who's here!" someone said, tapping me lightly on the shoulder.

The voice and the touch made me jump. I quickly turned to my right. My mouth opened in surprise. The person who had spoken to me was don Juan.

"My God, don Juan!" I exclaimed and a shiver shook my body from head to toe. "What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here?" he retorted as an echo.

I told him that I had stopped in the city for a couple of days before venturing into the mountains of central Mexico to search for him.

"Well, let's say then that I came down from the mountains to find you," he said, smiling.

He patted me on the shoulder several times. He seemed to be glad to see me. He put his hands on his hips and swelled his chest and asked me whether or not I liked his appearance. It was only then that I noticed he was wearing a suit. The full impact of such an incongruity hit me. I was dumfounded.

"How do you like my *tacuche?*" he asked, beaming.

He used the slang word "tacuche" instead of the standard Spanish word "traje" for suit.

"Today I'm in a suit," he said as if he had to explain; and then, pointing to my open mouth, he added, "Close it! Close it!"

I laughed absent-mindedly. He noticed my confusion. His body shook with laughter as he turned around so I could see him from every angle. His attire was incredible. He was wearing a light brown suit with pin stripes, brown shoes, a white shirt. And a necktie! And that made me wonder if he had any socks on, or was he wearing his shoes without them?

What added to my bewilderment was the maddening sensation I had had that when don Juan tapped me on the shoulder and I turned around I thought I had seen him in his khaki pants and shirt, his sandals and his straw hat, and then as he made me aware of his attire, and as I focused my attention on every detail of it, the complete unit of his dress became fixed, as if I had created it with my thoughts. My mouth seemed to be the area of my body which was most taxed by the surprise. It opened involuntarily. Don Juan touched me gently on my chin, as if he were helping me to close it.

"You certainly are developing a double chin," he said and laughed in short spurts.

I became aware then that he did not have a hat on, and that his short white hair was parted on the right side. He looked like an old Mexican gentleman, an impeccably tailored urban dweller.

I told him that to have found him there was so unnerving to me that I had to sit down. He was very understanding and suggested that we go to a nearby park.

We walked a few blocks in complete silence and then we arrived at

the Plaza Garibaldi, a place where musicians offered their services, a sort of musicians' employment center.

Don Juan and I merged with scores of spectators and tourists and walked around the park. After a while he stopped, leaned against a wall and pulled his pants up slightly at the knees; he was wearing light brown socks. I asked him to tell me the meaning of his mysterious apparel. His vague reply was that he simply had to be in a suit that day for reasons that would be clear to me later.

Finding Don Juan in a suit had been so unearthly that my agitation was almost uncontrollable. I had not seen him for several months and I wanted more than anything else in the world to talk with him, but somehow the setting was wrong and my attention meandered around. Don Juan must have noticed my anxiety and suggested that we walk to La Alameda, a more quiet park a few blocks away.

There were not too many people in the park and we had no trouble finding an empty bench. We sat down. My nervousness had given way to a feeling of uneasiness. I did not dare to look at don Juan.

There was a long unnerving pause; still without looking at him, I said that the inner voice had finally driven me to search for him, that the staggering events I had witnessed at his house had affected my life very deeply, and that I just had to talk about them.

He made a gesture of impatience with his hand and said that his policy was never to dwell on past events.

"What's important now is that you've fulfilled my suggestion," he said. "You have taken your daily world as a challenge, and the proof that you have stored sufficient personal power is the indisputable fact that you have found me with no difficulty whatever, at the precise spot where you were supposed to."

"I doubt very much that I could take credit for that," I said.

"I was waiting for you and then you showed up," he said. "That's all I know; that's all any warrior would care to know."

"What's going to happen now that I've found you?" I asked.

"For one thing," he said, "we won't discuss the dilemmas of your *reason;* those experiences belong to another time and to another mood. They are, properly speaking, only steps of an endless ladder;

to emphasize them would mean to take away from the importance of what's taking place now. A warrior cannot possibly afford to do that."

I had an almost invincible desire to complain. It was not that I resented anything that had happened to me but I craved solace and sympathy. Don Juan appeared to know my mood and spoke as if I had actually voiced my thoughts.

"Only as a warrior can one withstand the path of knowledge," he said. "A warrior cannot complain or regret anything. His life is an endless challenge, and challenges cannot possibly be good or bad. Challenges are simply challenges."

His tone was dry and severe, but his smile was warm and disarming.

"Now that you are here, what we'll do is wait for an omen," he said.

"What kind of omen?" I asked.

"We need to find out whether your power can stand on its own," he said. "The last time it petered out miserably; this time the circumstances of your personal life appear to have given you, at least on the surface, all the necessaries to deal with the sorcerers' explanation."

"Is there a chance that you might tell me about it?" I asked.

"It depends on your personal power," he said. "As is always the case in the doings and not-doings of warriors, personal power is the only thing that matters. So far, I should say that you're doing fine."

After a moment's silence, as if wanting to change the subject, he stood up and pointed to his suit.

"I have put on my suit for you," he said in a mysterious tone. "This suit is my challenge. Look how good I look in it! How easy! Eh? Nothing to it!"

Don Juan did look extraordinarily well in a suit. All I could think of as a gauge for comparison was the way my grandfather used to look in his heavy English flannel suit. He always gave me the impression that he felt unnatural, out of place in a suit. Don Juan, on the contrary, was so at ease.

"Do you think it is easy for me to look natural in a suit?" don Juan asked.

I did not know what to say. I concluded to myself, however, that judging by his appearance and by the way he conducted himself, it was the easiest thing in the world for him.

"To wear a suit is a challenge for me," he said. "A challenge as difficult as wearing sandals and a poncho would be for you. You have never had the necessity to take that as a challenge, though. My case is different; I'm an Indian."

We looked at each other. He raised his brows in a silent question, as if asking for my comments.

"The basic difference between an ordinary man and a warrior is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge," he went on, "while an ordinary man takes everything either as a blessing or as a curse. The fact that you're here today indicates that you have tipped the scales in favor of the warrior's way."

His stare made me feel nervous. I tried to get up and walk, but he made me sit down.

"You are going to sit here without fretting until we're through," he said imperatively. "We are waiting for an omen; we can't proceed without it, because it isn't enough that you found me, as it wasn't enough that you found Genaro that day in the desert. Your power must round itself up and give an indication."

"I can't figure out what you want," I said.

"I *saw* something prowling around this park," he said.

"Was it the ally?" I asked.

"No. It wasn't. So, we must sit here and find out what kind of omen your power is rounding up."

He then asked me to give him a detailed account of how I had carried out the recommendations made by don Genaro and himself about my daily world and my relations with people. I felt a bit embarrassed. He put me at ease with the argument that my personal affairs were not private, because they included a task of sorcery that he and don Genaro were fostering in me. I jokingly remarked that my life had been ruined because of that task of sorcery and recounted the difficulties in maintaining my day-to-day world.

I talked for a long time. Don Juan laughed at my account until tears were rolling down his cheeks. He slapped his thighs repeatedly;

that gesture, which I had seen him do hundreds of times, was definitely out of place when it was done on the pants of a suit. I was filled with apprehension, which I was compelled to voice.

"Your suit scares me more than anything you've done to me," I said.

"You'll get used to it," he said. "A warrior must be fluid and must shift harmoniously with the world around him, whether it is the world of *reason*, or the world of *will*.

"The most dangerous aspect of that shifting comes forth every time the warrior finds that the world is neither one nor the other. I was told that the only way to succeed in that crucial shifting was by proceeding in one's actions as if one believed. In other words, the secret of a warrior is that he believes without believing. But obviously a warrior cannot just say he believes and let it go at that. That would be too easy. To just believe would exonerate him from examining his situation. A warrior, whenever he has to involve himself with believing, does it as a choice, as an expression of his innermost predilection. A warrior doesn't believe, a warrior *has* to believe."

He stared at me for a few seconds as I wrote in my notebook. I remained silent. I could not say that I understood the difference, but I did not want to argue or ask questions. I wanted to think about what he had said, but my mind meandered as I looked around. On the street behind us there was a long line of automobiles and buses, blowing their horns. At the edge of the park, perhaps twenty yards away, directly in line with the bench where we were sitting, a group of about seven people, including three policemen in light gray uniforms, stood over a man lying motionless on the grass. He seemed to be drunk or perhaps seriously ill.

I glanced at don Juan. He had also been looking at the man.

I told him that for some reason I was incapable of clarifying by myself what he had just said to me.

"I don't want to ask questions any more," I said. "But if I don't ask you to explain I don't understand. Not to ask questions is very abnormal for me."

"Please, be normal, by all means," he said with feigned seriousness.

I said that I did not understand the difference between believing and having to believe. To me both were the same. To conceive that the statements were different was splitting hairs.

"Remember the story you once told me about your friend and her cats?" he asked casually.

He looked up at the sky and leaned back against the bench, stretching his legs. He put his hands behind his head and contracted the muscles of his whole body. As it always happens, his bones made a loud cracking sound.

He was referring to a story I had once told him about a friend of mine who found two kittens, almost dead, inside a dryer in a laundromat. She revived them and through excellent nourishment and care groomed them into two gigantic cats, a black one and a reddish one.

Two years later she sold her house. Since she could not take the cats with her and was unable to find another home for them, all she could do under the circumstances was to take them to an animal hospital and have them put to sleep.

I helped her take them. The cats had never been inside a car; she tried to calm them down. They scratched and bit her, especially the reddish cat, the one she called Max. When we finally arrived at the animal hospital, she took the black cat first; holding it in her arms, and without saying a word she got out of the car. The cat played with her; pawing her gently as she pushed open the glass door to enter the hospital.

I glanced at Max; he was sitting in the back. The movement of my head must have scared him, for he dove under the driver's seat. I made the seat slide backwards. I did not want to reach under it for fear that he would bite or scratch my hand. The cat was lying inside a depression on the floor of the car. He seemed very agitated; his breathing was accelerated. He looked at me; our eyes met and an overwhelming sensation possessed me. Something took hold of my

body, a form of apprehension, despair, or perhaps embarrassment for being part of what was taking place.

I felt a need to explain to Max that it was my friend's decision, and that I was only helping her. The cat kept on looking at me as if he understood my words.

I looked to see if she was coming. I could see her through the glass door. She was talking to the receptionist. My body felt a strange jolt and automatically I opened the door of my car.

"Run, Max, run!" I said to the cat.

He jumped out of the car, dashed across the street with his body close to the ground, like a true feline. The opposite side of the street was empty; there were no cars parked and I could see Max running down the street along the gutter. He reached the corner of a big boulevard and then dove through the storm drain into the sewer.

My friend came back. I told her that Max had left. She got into the car and we drove away without saying a single word.

In the months that followed, the incident became a symbol to me. I fancied or perhaps I saw a weird flicker in Max's eyes when he looked at me before jumping out of the car. And I believed that for an instant that castrated, overweight, and useless pet became a cat.

I told don Juan that I was convinced that when Max had run across the street and plunged into the sewer his "cat spirit" was impeccable, and that perhaps at no other time in his life was his "catness" so evident. The impression that the incident left on me was unforgettable.

I told the story to all of my friends; after telling it and retelling it, my identification with the cat became quite pleasurable.

I thought myself to be like Max, overindulgent, domesticated in many ways, and yet I could not help thinking that there was always the possibility of one moment in which the spirit of man might take over my whole being, just like the spirit of "catness" took over Max's bloated and useless body.

Don Juan had liked the story and had made some casual comments about it. He had said that it was not so difficult to let the spirit of man flow and take over; to sustain it, however, was something that only a warrior could do.

* * *

"What about the story of the cats?" I asked.

"You told me you believed that you're taking your chances, like Max," he said.

"I do believe that."

"What I've been trying to tell you is that as a warrior you cannot just believe this and let it go at that. With Max, *having* to believe means that you accept the fact that his escape might have been a useless outburst. He might have jumped into the sewer and died instantly. He might have drowned or starved to death, or he might have been eaten by rats. A warrior considers all those possibilities and then chooses to believe in accordance with his innermost predilection.

"As a warrior you *have* to believe that Max made it, that he not only escaped but that he sustained his power. You *have* to believe it. Let's say that without that belief you have nothing."

The distinction became very clear. I thought I really had chosen to believe that Max had survived, knowing that he was handicapped by a lifetime of soft and pampered living.

"Believing is a cinch," don Juan went on. "*Having* to believe is something else. In this case, for instance, power gave you a splendid lesson, but you chose to use only part of it. If you *have* to believe, however, you must use all the event."

"I see what you mean," I said.

My mind was in a state of clarity and I thought I was grasping his concepts with no effort at all.

"I'm afraid you still don't understand," he said, almost whispering.

He stared at me. I held his look for a moment.

"What about the other cat?" he asked.

"Uh? The other cat?" I repeated involuntarily.

I had forgotten about it. My symbol had rotated around Max. The other cat was of no consequence to me.

"But he is!" don Juan exclaimed when I voiced my thoughts. "*Having* to believe means that you have to also account for the other cat. The one that went playfully licking the hands that were carrying

him to his doom. That was the cat that went to his death trustingly, filled with his cat's judgments.

"You think you're like Max, therefore you have forgotten about the other cat. You don't even know his name. *Having* to believe means that you must consider everything, and before deciding that you are like Max you must consider that you may be like the other cat; instead of running for your life and taking your chances, you may be going to your doom happily, filled with your judgments."

There was an intriguing sadness in his words, or perhaps the sadness was mine. We remained quiet for a long time. Never had it crossed my mind that I might be like the other cat. The thought was very distressing to me.

A mild commotion and the muffled sound of voices suddenly forced me out of my mental deliberations. Policemen were dispersing some people gathered around the man lying on the grass. Someone had propped the man's head on a rolled up jacket. The man was lying parallel to the street. He was facing east. From where I sat I could almost tell that his eyes were open.

Don Juan sighed.

"What a magnificent afternoon," he said, looking at the sky.

"I don't like Mexico City," I said.

"Why not?"

"I hate the smog."

He shook his head rhythmically is if he were agreeing with me.

"I would rather be with you in the desert, or in the mountains," I said.

"If I were you I would never say that," he said.

"I didn't mean anything wrong, don Juan."

"We both know that. It is not what you mean that matters, though. A warrior, or any man for that matter, cannot possibly wish he were somewhere else; a warrior because he lives by challenge, an ordinary man because he doesn't know where his death is going to find him.

"Look at that man over there lying on the grass. What do you think is wrong with him?"

"He's either drunk or ill," I said.

"He's dying!" don Juan said with ultimate conviction. "When we

sat down here I caught a glimpse of his death as it circled around him. That's why I told you not to get up; rain or shine, you can't get up from this bench until the end. This is the omen we have been waiting for. It is late afternoon. Right now the sun is about to set. It is your hour of power. Look! The view of that man is only for us."

He pointed out that from where we sat we had an unobstructed view of the man. A group of curious bystanders were gathered in a half circle on the other side of him, opposite us.

The sight of the man lying on the grass became very disturbing to me. He was lean and dark, still young. His black hair was short and curly. His shirt was unbuttoned and his chest was uncovered. He was wearing an orange cardigan sweater with holes in the elbows, and some old beat up gray slacks. His shoes, of some undefined faded color, were untied. He was rigid. I could not tell whether or not he was breathing. I wondered if he were dying, as don Juan had said. Or was don Juan simply using the event to make a point? My past experiences with him gave me the certainty that somehow he was making everything fit into some mysterious scheme of his.

After a long silence I turned to him. His eyes were closed. He began to talk without opening them.

"That man is about to die now," he said. "You don't believe it, though, do you?"

He opened his eyes and stared at me for a second. His look was so penetrating that it stunned me.

"No. I don't believe it," I said.

I really felt that the whole thing was too easy. We had come to sit in the park and right there, as if everything were being staged, was a man dying.

"The world adjusts itself to itself," don Juan said after listening to my doubts. "This is not a setup. This is an omen, an act of power.

"The world upheld by *reason* makes all this into an event that we can watch for a moment on our way to more important things. All we can say about it is that a man is lying on the grass in the park, perhaps drunk.

"The world upheld by *will* makes it into an act of power, which we can *see*. We can *see* death whirling around the man, setting its

hooks deeper and deeper into his luminous fibers. We can *see* the luminous strings losing their tautness and vanishing one by one.

"Those are the two possibilities opened to us luminous beings. You are somewhere in the middle, still wanting to have everything under the rubric of *reason*. And yet, how can you discard the fact that your personal power rounded up an omen? We came to this park, after you had found me where I had been waiting for you—you found me by just walking into me, without thinking, or planning, or deliberately using your *reason*—and after we sat down here to wait for an omen, we became aware of that man, each of us noticed him in our own way, you with your *reason*, I with my *will*.

"That dying man is one of the cubic centimeters of chance that power always makes available to a warrior. The warrior's art is to be perennially fluid in order to pluck it. I have plucked it, but have you?"

I could not answer. I became aware of an immense chasm within myself and for a moment I was somehow cognizant of the two worlds he was talking about.

"What an exquisite omen this is!" he went on. "And all for you. Power is showing you that death is the indispensable ingredient in *having* to believe. Without the awareness of death everything is ordinary, trivial. It is only because death is stalking us that the world is an unfathomable mystery. Power has shown you that. All I have done myself is to round up the details of the omen, so the direction would be clear to you; but in rounding up the details, I have also shown you that everything I have said to you today is what I *have* to believe myself, because that is the predilection of my spirit."

We looked each other in the eye for a moment.

"I remember a poem that you used to read to me," he said, moving his eyes to the side. "About a man who vowed to die in Paris. How does it go?"

The poem was Cesar Vallejo's "Black Stone on a White Stone." I had read and recited the first two stanzas to don Juan countless times at his request.

I will die in Paris while it rains,
on a day which I already remember.
I will die in Paris—and I do not run away—
perhaps in the Autumn, on a Thursday, as it is today.

It will be a Thursday, because today,
the Thursday that I write these lines,
my bones feel the turn,
and never so much as today, in all my road,
have I seen myself alone.

The poem summed up an indescribable melancholy for me.

Don Juan whispered that he *had* to believe that the dying man had had enough personal power to enable him to choose the streets of Mexico City as the place of his death.

"We're back again to the story of the two cats," he said. "We *have* to believe that Max became aware of what was stalking him and, like that man over there, had enough power at least to choose the place of his end. But then there was the other cat, just like there are other men whose death will encircle them while they are alone, unaware, staring at the walls and ceiling of an ugly barren room.

"That man, on the other hand, is dying where he has always lived, in the streets. Three policemen are his guards of honor. And as he fades away his eyes will catch a last glimpse of the lights in the stores across the street—the cars, the trees, the throngs of people milling around—and his ears will be flooded for the last time with the sounds of traffic and the voices of men and women as they walk by.

"So you see, without an awareness of the presence of our death there is no power, no mystery."

I stared at the man for a long time. He was motionless. Perhaps he was dead. But my disbelief did not matter any longer. Don Juan was right. *Having* to believe that the world is mysterious and unfathomable was the expression of a warrior's innermost predilection. Without it he had nothing.

THE ISLAND OF THE TONAL

Don Juan and I met again the next day at the same park around noon. He was still wearing his brown suit. We sat on a bench; he took off his coat, folded it very carefully, but with an air of supreme casualness, and laid it on the bench. His casualness was very studied and yet it was completely natural. I caught myself staring at him. He seemed to be aware of the paradox he was presenting to me and smiled. He straightened his necktie. He had on a beige long-sleeved shirt. It fitted him very well.

"I still have on my suit because I want to tell you something of great importance," he said, patting me on the shoulder. "You had a good performance yesterday. Now it is time to come to some final agreements."

He paused for a long moment. He seemed to be preparing a statement. I had a strange feeling in my stomach. My immediate assumption was that he was going to tell me the sorcerers' explanation. He stood up a couple of times and paced back and forth in front of me, as if it were difficult to voice what he had in mind.

"Let's go to the restaurant across the street and have a bite to eat," he finally said.

He unfolded his coat, and before he put it on he showed me that it was fully lined.

"It is made to order," he said and smiled as if he were proud of it, as if it mattered.

"I have to call your attention to it, or you wouldn't notice it, and it

is very important that you are aware of it. You are aware of everything only when you think you should be; the condition of a warrior, however, is to be aware of everything at all times.

"My suit and all this paraphernalia is important because it represents my condition in life. Or rather, the condition of one of the two parts of my totality. This discussion has been pending. I feel that now is the time to have it. It has to be done properly, though, or it will never make sense. I wanted my suit to give you the first clue. I think it has. Now is the time to talk, for in matters of this topic there is no complete understanding without talking."

"What is the topic, don Juan?"

"The totality of oneself," he said.

He stood up abruptly and led me to a restaurant in a large hotel across the street. A hostess with a rather unfriendly disposition gave us a table inside in a back corner. Obviously the choice places were around the windows.

I told don Juan that the woman reminded me of another hostess in a restaurant in Arizona where don Juan and I had once gone to eat, who had asked us, before she handed out the menu, if we had enough money to pay.

"I don't blame this poor woman either," don Juan said, as if sympathizing with her. "She too, like the other one, is afraid of Mexicans."

He laughed softly. A couple of people at the adjacent tables turned their heads around and looked at us.

Don Juan said that without knowing, or perhaps even in spite of herself, the hostess had given us the best table in the house, a table where we could talk and I could write to my heart's content.

I had just taken my writing pad out of my pocket and put it on the table when the waiter suddenly loomed over us. He also seemed to be in a bad mood. He stood over us with a challenging air.

Don Juan proceeded to order a very elaborate meal for himself. He ordered without looking at the menu, as if he knew it by heart. I was at a loss; the waiter had appeared unexpectedly and I had not had time to read the menu, so I told him that I would have the same.

Don Juan whispered in my ear, "I bet you that they don't have what I've ordered."

He stretched his arms and legs and told me to relax and sit comfortably because the meal was going to take forever to be prepared.

"You are at a very poignant crossroad," he said. "Perhaps the last one, and also perhaps the most difficult one to understand. Some of the things I am going to point out to you today will probably never be clear. They are not supposed to be clear anyway. So don't be embarrassed or discouraged. All of us are dumb creatures when we join the world of sorcery, and to join it doesn't in any sense insure us that we will change. Some of us remain dumb until the very end."

I liked it when he included himself among the idiots. I knew that he did not do it out of kindness, but as a didactic device.

"Don't fret if you don't make sense out of what I'm going to tell you," he continued. "Considering your temperament, I'm afraid that you might knock yourself out trying to understand. Don't! What I'm about to say is meant only to point out a direction."

I had a sudden feeling of apprehension. Don Juan's admonitions forced me into an endless speculation. He had warned me on other occasions, in very much the same fashion, and every time he had done so, what he was warning me about had turned out to be a devastating issue.

"It makes me very nervous when you talk to me this way," I said.

"I know it," he replied calmly. "I'm deliberately trying to get you on your toes. I need your attention, your undivided attention."

He paused and looked at me. I laughed nervously and involuntarily. I knew that he was stretching the dramatic possibilities of the situation as far as he could.

"I'm not telling you all this for effect," he said, as if he had read my thoughts. "I am simply giving you time to make the proper adjustments."

At that moment the waiter stopped at our table to announce that they did not have what we had ordered. Don Juan laughed out loud and ordered tortillas and beans. The waiter chuckled scornfully and said that they did not serve them and suggested steak or chicken. We settled for some soup.

We ate in silence. I did not like the soup and could not finish it, but don Juan ate all of his.

"I have put on my suit," he said all of a sudden, "in order to tell you about something, something you already know but which needs to be clarified if it is going to be effective. I have waited until now, because Genaro feels that you have to be not only willing to undertake the road of knowledge, but your efforts by themselves must be impeccable enough to make you worthy of that knowledge. You have done well. Now I will tell you the sorcerers' explanation."

He paused again, rubbed his cheeks and played with his tongue inside his mouth, as if he were feeling his teeth.

"I'm going to tell you about the *tonal* and the *nagual*," he said and looked at me piercingly.

This was the first time in our association that he had used those two terms. I was vaguely familiar with them through the anthropological literature on the cultures of central Mexico. I knew that the "tonal" (pronounced, toh-na'hl) was thought to be a kind of guardian spirit, usually an animal, that a child obtained at birth and with which he had intimate ties for the rest of his life. "Nagual" (pronounced, nah-wa'hl) was the name given to the animal into which sorcerers could allegedly transform themselves, or to the sorcerer that elicited such a transformation.

"This is my *tonal*," don Juan said, rubbing his hands on his chest.

"Your suit?"

"No. My person."

He pounded his chest and his thighs and the side of his ribs.

"My *tonal* is all this."

He explained that every human being had two sides, two separate entities, two counterparts which became operative at the moment of birth; one was called the "tonal" and the other the "nagual."

I told him what anthropologists knew about the two concepts. He let me speak without interrupting me.

"Well, whatever you may think you know about them is pure nonsense," he said. "I base this statement on the fact that whatever I'm telling you about the *tonal* and the *nagual* could not possibly have been told to you before. Any idiot would know that you know

nothing about them, because in order to be acquainted with them, you would have to be a sorcerer and you aren't. Or you would've had to talk about them with a sorcerer and you haven't. So disregard everything you've heard before, because it is inapplicable."

"It was only a comment," I said.

He raised his brows in a comical gesture.

"Your comments are out of order," he said. "This time I need your undivided attention, since I am going to acquaint you with the *tonal* and the *nagual*. Sorcerers have a special and unique interest in that knowledge. I would say that the *tonal* and the *nagual* are in the exclusive realm of men of knowledge. In your case, this is the lid that closes everything I have taught you. Thus, I have waited until now to talk about them.

"The *tonal* is not an animal that guards a person. I would rather say that it is a guardian that could be represented as an animal. But that is not the important point."

He smiled and winked at me.

"I'm using your own words now," he said. "The *tonal* is the social person."

He laughed, I supposed, at the sight of my bewilderment.

"The *tonal* is, rightfully so, a protector, a guardian—a guardian that most of the time turns into a guard."

I fumbled with my notebook. I was trying to pay attention to what he was saying. He laughed and mimicked my nervous movements.

"The *tonal* is the organizer of the world," he proceeded. "Perhaps the best way of describing its monumental work is to say that on its shoulders rests the task of setting the chaos of the world in order. It is not farfetched to maintain, as sorcerers do, that everything we know and do as men is the work of the *tonal*.

"At this moment, for instance, what is engaged in trying to make sense out of our conversation is your *tonal*; without it there would be only weird sounds and grimaces and you wouldn't understand a thing of what I'm saying.

"I would say then that the *tonal* is a guardian that protects something priceless, our very being. Therefore, an inherent quality of the

tonal is to be cagey and jealous of its doings. And since its doings are by far the most important part of our lives, it is no wonder that it eventually changes, in every one of us, from a guardian into a guard."

He stopped and asked me if I had understood. I automatically nodded my head affirmatively and he smiled with an air of incredulity.

"A guardian is broad-minded and understanding," he explained. "A guard, on the other hand, is a vigilante, narrow-minded and most of the time despotic. I say, then, that the *tonal* in all of us has been made into a petty and despotic guard when it should be a broad-minded guardian."

I definitely was not following the trend of his explanation. I heard and wrote down every word and yet I seemed to be stuck with some internal dialogue of my own.

"It is very hard for me to follow your point," I said.

"If you didn't get hooked on talking to yourself you would have no quarrels," he said cuttingly.

His remark threw me into a long explanatory statement. I finally caught myself and apologized for my insistence on defending myself.

He smiled and made a gesture that seemed to indicate that my attitude had not really annoyed him.

"The *tonal* is everything we are," he proceeded. "Name it! Anything we have a word for is the *tonal*. And since the *tonal* is its own doings, then everything, obviously, has to fall under its domain."

I reminded him that he had said that the "tonal" was the social person, a term which I myself had used with him to mean a human being as the end result of socialization processes. I pointed out that if the "tonal" was that product, it could not be everything, as he had said, because the world around us was not the product of socialization.

Don Juan reminded me that my argument had no basis for him, and that, long before, he had already made the point that there was no world at large but only a description of the world which we had learned to visualize and take for granted.

"The *tonal* is everything we know," he said. "I think this in itself is

enough reason for the *tonal* to be such an overpowering affair."

He paused for a moment. He seemed to be definitely waiting for comments or questions, but I had none. Yet I felt obligated to voice a question and struggled to formulate an appropriate one. I failed. I felt that the admonitions with which he had opened our conversation had perhaps served as a deterrent to any inquiry on my part. I felt strangely numb. I could not concentrate and order my thoughts. In fact I felt and knew, without the shadow of a doubt, that I was incapable of thinking and yet I knew this without thinking, if that were at all possible.

I looked at don Juan. He was staring at the middle part of my body. He lifted his eyes and my clarity of mind returned instantly.

"The *tonal* is everything we know," he repeated slowly. "And that includes not only us, as persons, but everything in our world. It can be said that the *tonal* is everything that meets the eye.

"We begin to groom it at the moment of birth. The moment we take the first gasp of air we also breathe in power for the *tonal*. So, it is proper to say that the *tonal* of a human being is intimately tied to his birth.

"You must remember this point. It is of great importance in understanding all this. The *tonal* begins at birth and ends at death."

I wanted to recapitulate all the points that he had made. I went as far as opening my mouth to ask him to repeat the salient points of our conversation, but to my amazement I could not vocalize my words. I was experiencing a most curious incapacity, my words were heavy and I had no control over that sensation.

I looked at don Juan to signal him that I could not talk. He was again staring at the area around my stomach.

He lifted his eyes and asked me how I felt. Words poured out of me as if I had been unplugged. I told him that I had been having the peculiar sensation of not being able to talk or think and yet my thoughts had been crystal clear.

"Your thoughts have been crystal clear?" he asked.

I realized then that the clarity had not pertained to my thoughts, but to my perception of the world.

"Are you doing something to me, don Juan?" I asked.

"I am trying to convince you that your comments are not necessary," he said and laughed.

"You mean you don't want me to ask questions?"

"No, no. Ask anything you want, but don't let your attention waver."

I had to admit that I had been distracted by the immensity of the topic.

"I still cannot understand, don Juan, what you mean by the statement that the *tonal* is everything," I said after a moment's pause.

"The *tonal* is what makes the world."

"Is the *tonal* the creator of the world?"

Don Juan scratched his temples.

"The *tonal* makes the world only in a manner of speaking. It cannot create or change anything, and yet it makes the world because its function is to judge, and assess, and witness. I say that the *tonal* makes the world because it witnesses and assesses it according to *tonal* rules. In a very strange manner the *tonal* is a creator that doesn't create a thing. In other words, the *tonal* makes up the rules by which it apprehends the world. So, in a manner of speaking, it creates the world."

He hummed a popular tune, beating the rhythm with his fingers on the side of his chair. His eyes were shining; they seemed to sparkle. He chuckled, shaking his head.

"You're not following me," he said, smiling.

"I am. I have no problems," I said, but I did not sound very convincing.

"The *tonal* is an island," he explained. "The best way of describing it is to say that the *tonal* is this."

He ran his hand over the table top.

"We can say that the *tonal* is like the top of this table. An island. And on this island we have everything. This island is, in fact, the world.

"There is a personal *tonal* for every one of us, and there is a collective one for all of us at any given time, which we can call the *tonal* of the times."

He pointed to the rows of tables in the restaurant.

"Look! Every table has the same configuration. Certain items are present on all of them. They are, however, individually different from each other; some tables are more crowded than others; they have different food on them, different plates, different atmosphere, yet we have to admit that all the tables in this restaurant are very alike. The same thing happens with the *tonal*. We can say that the *tonal* of the times is what makes us alike, in the same way it makes all the tables in this restaurant alike. Each table separately, nevertheless, is an individual case, just like the personal *tonal* of each of us. But the important factor to keep in mind is that everything we know about ourselves and about our world is on the island of the *tonal*. See what I mean?"

"If the *tonal* is everything we know about ourselves and our world, what, then, is the *nagual?*"

"The *nagual* is the part of us which we do not deal with at all."

"I beg your pardon?"

"The *nagual* is the part of us for which there is no description—no words, no names, no feelings, no knowledge."

"That's a contradiction, don Juan. In my opinion if it can't be felt or described or named, it cannot exist."

"It's a contradiction only in your opinion. I warned you before, don't knock yourself out trying to understand this."

"Would you say that the *nagual* is the mind?"

"No. The mind is an item on the table. The mind is part of the *tonal*. Let's say that the mind is the chili sauce."

He took a bottle of sauce and placed it in front of me.

"Is the *nagual* the soul?"

"No. The soul is also on the table. Let's say that the soul is the ashtray."

"Is it the thoughts of men?"

"No. Thoughts are also on the table. Thoughts are like the silverware."

He picked up a fork and placed it next to the chili sauce and the ashtray.

"Is it a state of grace? Heaven?"

"Not that either. That, whatever it might be, is also part of the *tonal*. It is, let's say, the napkin."

I went on giving possible ways of describing what he was alluding to: pure intellect, psyche, energy, vital force, immortality, life principle. For each thing I named he found an item on the table to serve as a counterpart and shoved it in front of me, until he had all the objects on the table stashed in one pile.

Don Juan seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. He giggled and rubbed his hands every time I named another possibility.

"Is the *nagual* the Supreme Being, the Almighty, God?" I asked.

"No. God is also on the table. Let's say that God is the tablecloth."

He made a joking gesture of pulling the tablecloth in order to stack it up with the rest of the items he had put in front of me.

"But, are you saying that God does not exist?"

"No. I didn't say that. All I said was that the *nagual* was not God, because God is an item of our personal *tonal* and of the *tonal* of the times. The *tonal* is, as I've already said, everything we think the world is composed of, including God, of course. God has no more importance other than being a part of the *tonal* of our time."

"In my understanding, don Juan, God is everything. Aren't we talking about the same thing?"

"No. God is only everything you can think of, therefore, properly speaking, he is only another item on the island. God cannot be witnessed at will, he can only be talked about. The *nagual*, on the other hand, is at the service of the warrior. It can be witnessed, but it cannot be talked about."

"If the *nagual* is not any of the things I have mentioned," I said, "perhaps you can tell me about its location. Where is it?"

Don Juan made a sweeping gesture and pointed to the area beyond the boundaries of the table. He swept his hand, as if with the back of it he were cleaning an imaginary surface that went beyond the edges of the table.

"The *nagual* is there," he said. "There, surrounding the island. The *nagual* is there, where power hovers.

"We sense, from the moment we are born, that there are two parts

to us. At the time of birth, and for a while after, we are all *nagual*. We sense, then, that in order to function we need a counterpart to what we have. The *tonal* is missing and that gives us, from the very beginning, a feeling of incompleteness. Then the *tonal* starts to develop and it becomes utterly important to our functioning, so important that it opaques the shine of the *nagual*, it overwhelms it. From the moment we become all *tonal* we do nothing else but to increment that old feeling of incompleteness which accompanies us from the moment of our birth, and which tells us constantly that there is another part to give us completeness.

"From the moment we become all *tonal* we begin making pairs. We sense our two sides, but we always represent them with items of the *tonal*. We say that the two parts of us are the soul and the body. Or mind and matter. Or good and evil. God and Satan. We never realize, however, that we are merely pairing things on the island, very much like pairing coffee and tea, or bread and tortillas, or chili and mustard. I tell you, we are weird animals. We get carried away and in our madness we believe ourselves to be making perfect sense."

Don Juan stood up and addressed me as if he were an orator. He pointed his index finger at me and made his head shiver.

"Man doesn't move between good and evil," he said in a hilariously rhetorical tone, grabbing the salt and pepper shakers in both hands. "His true movement is between negativeness and positiveness."

He dropped the salt and pepper and clutched a knife and fork.

"You're wrong! There is no movement," he continued as if he were answering himself. "Man is only mind!"

He took the bottle of sauce and held it up. Then he put it down.

"As you can see," he said softly, "we can easily replace chili sauce for mind and end up saying, 'Man is only chili sauce!' Doing that won't make us more demented than we already are."

"I'm afraid I haven't asked the right question," I said. "Maybe we could arrive at a better understanding if I asked what one can specifically find in that area beyond the island?"

"There is no way of answering that. If I would say, Nothing, I

would only make the *nagual* part of the *tonal*. All I can say is that there, beyond the island, one finds the *nagual*."

"But, when you call it the *nagual*, aren't you also placing it on the island?"

"No. I named it only because I wanted to make you aware of it."

"All right! But becoming aware of it is the step that has turned the *nagual* into a new item of my *tonal*."

"I'm afraid you do not understand. I have named the *tonal* and the *nagual* as a true pair. That is all I have done."

He reminded me that once, while trying to explain to him my insistence on meaning, I had discussed the idea that children might not be capable of comprehending the difference between "father" and "mother" until they were quite developed in terms of handling meaning, and that they would perhaps believe that it might be that "father" wears pants and "mother" skirts, or other differences dealing with hairstyle, or size of body, or items of clothing.

"We certainly do the same thing with the two parts of us," he said. "We sense that there is another side to us. But when we try to pin down that other side the *tonal* gets hold of the baton, and as a director it is quite petty and jealous. It dazzles us with its cunningness and forces us to obliterate the slightest inkling of the other part of the true pair, the *nagual*."

THE DAY OF THE TONAL

As we left the restaurant I told don Juan that he had been correct in warning me about the difficulty of the topic, and that my intellectual prowess was inadequate to grasp his concepts and explanations. I suggested that perhaps if I should go to my hotel and read my notes, my comprehension of the subject might improve. He tried to put me at ease; he said that I was worrying about words. While he was speaking I experienced a shiver, and for an instant I sensed that there was indeed another area within me.

I mentioned to don Juan that I was having some inexplicable feelings. My statement apparently aroused his curiosity. I told him that I had had the same feelings before, and that they seemed to be momentary lapses, interruptions in my flow of awareness. They always manifested themselves as a jolt in my body followed by the sensation that I was suspended in something.

We headed for downtown, walking leisurely. Don Juan asked me to relate all the details of my lapses. I had a hard time describing them, beyond the point of calling them moments of forgetfulness, or absent-mindedness, or not watching what I was doing.

He patiently rebuffed me. He pointed out that I was a demanding person, had an excellent memory, and was very careful in my actions. It had occurred to me at first that those peculiar lapses were associated with stopping the internal dialogue, but I also had had them when I had talked to myself extensively. They seemed to stem from an area independent of everything I knew.

Don Juan patted me on the back. He smiled with apparent delight.

"You're finally beginning to make real connections," he said.

I asked him to explain his cryptic statement, but he abruptly stopped our conversation and signaled me to follow him to a small park in front of a church.

"This is the end of our journey to downtown," he said and sat down on a bench. "Right here we have an ideal spot to watch people. There are some who walk by on the street and others who come to church. From here we can see everyone."

He pointed to a wide business street and to the gravel walk leading to the steps of the church. Our bench was located midway between the church and the street.

"This is my very favorite bench," he said, caressing the wood.

He winked at me and added with a grin, "It likes me. That's why no one was sitting on it. It knew I was coming."

"The bench knew that?"

"No! Not the bench. My *nagual*."

"Does the *nagual* have consciousness? Is it aware of things?"

"Of course. It is aware of everything. That's why I'm interested in your account. What you call lapses and feelings is the *nagual*. In order to talk about it we must borrow from the island of the *tonal*, therefore it is more convenient not to explain it but to simply recount its effects."

I wanted to say something else about those peculiar feelings, but he hushed me.

"No more. Today is not the day of the *nagual*, today is the day of the *tonal*," he said. "I put on my suit because today I am all *tonal*."

He stared at me. I was about to tell him that the subject was proving to be more difficult than anything he had ever explained to me; he seemed to have anticipated my words.

"It is difficult," he continued. "I know it. But considering that this is the final lid, the last stage of what I've been teaching you, it is not too farfetched to say that it envelops everything I mentioned since the first day we met."

We remained quiet for a long while. I felt that I had to wait for

him to resume his explanation, but I had a sudden attack of apprehension and hurriedly asked, "Are the *nagual* and the *tonal* within ourselves?"

He looked at me piercingly.

"Very difficult question," he said. "You yourself would say that they are within ourselves. I myself would say that they are not, but neither of us would be right. The *tonal* of your time calls for you to maintain that everything dealing with your feelings and thoughts takes place within yourself. The sorcerers' *tonal* says the opposite, everything is outside. Who's right? No one. Inside, outside, it doesn't really matter."

I raised a point. I said that when he talked about the "tonal" and the "nagual" it sounded as if there was still a third part. He had said that the "tonal" "forces us" to perform acts. I asked him to tell me who he was referring to as being forced.

He did not answer me directly.

"To explain all this is not that simple," he said. "No matter how clever the checkpoints of the *tonal* are the fact of the matter is that the *nagual* surfaces. Its coming to the surface is always inadvertent, though. The *tonal*'s great art is to suppress any manifestation of the *nagual* in such a manner that even if its presence should be the most obvious thing in the world, it is unnoticeable."

"For whom is it unnoticeable?"

He chuckled, shaking his head up and down. I pressed him for an answer.

"For the *tonal*," he said. "I'm speaking about it exclusively. I may go around in circles but that shouldn't surprise or annoy you. I warned you about the difficulty of understanding what I have to tell. I went through all that rigamarole because my *tonal* is aware that it is speaking about itself. In other words, my *tonal* is using itself in order to understand the information I want your *tonal* to be clear about. Let's say that the *tonal*, since it is keenly aware of how taxing it is to speak of itself, has created the terms 'I,' 'myself,' and so forth as a balance and thanks to them it can talk with other *tonals*, or with itself, about itself.

"Now when I say that the *tonal* forces us to do something, I don't

mean that there is a third party there. Obviously it forces itself to follow its own judgments.

"On certain occasions, however, or under certain special circumstances, something in the *tonal* itself becomes aware that there is more to us. It is like a voice that comes from the depths, the voice of the *nagual*. You see, the totality of ourselves is a natural condition which the *tonal* cannot obliterate altogether, and there are moments, especially in the life of a warrior, when the totality becomes apparent. At those moments one can surmise and assess what we really are.

"I was concerned with those jolts you have had, because that is the way the *nagual* surfaces. At those moments the *tonal* becomes aware of the totality of oneself. It is always a jolt because that awareness disrupts the lull. I call that awareness the totality of the being that is going to die. The idea is that at the moment of death the other member of the true pair, the *nagual*, becomes fully operative and the awareness and memories and perceptions stored in our calves and thighs, in our back and shoulders and neck, begin to expand and disintegrate. Like the beads of an endless broken necklace, they fall asunder without the binding force of life."

He looked at me. His eyes were peaceful. I felt ill at ease, stupid.

"The totality of ourselves is a very tacky affair," he said. "We need only a very small portion of it to fulfill the most complex tasks of life. Yet when we die, we die with the totality of ourselves. A sorcerer asks the question, 'If we're going to die with the totality of ourselves, why not, then, live with that totality?' "

He signaled me with his head to watch the scores of people that went by.

"They're all *tonal*," he said. "I am going to single some of them out so your *tonal* will assess them, and in assessing them it will assess itself."

He directed my attention to two old ladies that had emerged from the church. They stood at the top of the limestone steps for a moment and then began to walk down with infinite care, resting on every step.

"Watch those two women very carefully," he said. "But don't see

them as persons, or as faces that hold things in common with us; see them as *tonals.*"

The two women got to the bottom of the steps. They moved as if the rough gravel were marbles and they were about to roll and lose their balance on them. They walked arm in arm, propping each other up with the weight of their bodies.

"Look at them!" don Juan said in a low voice. "Those women are the best example of the most miserable *tonal* one can find."

I noticed that the two women were small-boned but fat. They were perhaps in their early fifties. They had a painful look in their faces, as if walking down the church steps had been beyond their strength.

They were in front of us; they vacillated for a moment and then they came to a halt. There was one more step on the gravel walk.

"Watch your step, ladies," don Juan shouted as he stood up dramatically.

The women looked at him, apparently confused by his sudden outburst.

"My mom broke her hip right there the other day," he added and dashed over to help them.

They thanked him profusely and he advised them that if they ever lost their balance and fell down, they had to remain motionless on the spot until the ambulance came. His tone was sincere and convincing. The women crossed themselves.

Don Juan sat down again. His eyes were beaming. He spoke softly.

"Those women are not that old and their bodies are not that weak, and yet they are decrepit. Everything about them is dreary—their clothes, their smell, their attitude. Why do you think that's so?"

"Maybe they were born that way," I said.

"No one is born that way. We make ourselves that way. The *tonal* of those women is weak and timid.

"I said that today was going to be the day of the *tonal;* I meant that today I want to deal with it exclusively. I also said that I had put on my suit for that specific purpose. With it I wanted to show you that a

warrior treats his *tonal* in a very special manner. I've pointed out to you that my suit has been made to order and that everything I have on today fits me to perfection. It is not my vanity that I wanted to show, but my warrior's spirit, my warrior's *tonal*.

"Those two women gave you your first view of the *tonal* today. Life can be as merciless with you as it is with them, if you are careless with your *tonal*. I put myself as the counterpoint. If you understand correctly I should not need to stress this point."

I had a sudden attack of uncertainty and asked him to spell out what I should have understood.

I must have sounded desperate. He laughed out loud.

"Look at that young man in green pants and a pink shirt," don Juan whispered, pointing to a very thin and very dark complexioned, sharp-featured young man who was standing almost in front of us. He seemed to be undecided whether to go towards the church or towards the street. Twice he raised his hand in the direction of the church as though he were talking to himself and were about to start moving towards it. Then he stared at me with a blank expression.

"Look at the way he's dressed," don Juan said in a whisper. "Look at those shoes!"

The young man's clothes were tattered and wrinkled, and his shoes were in absolute pieces.

"He's obviously very poor," I said.

"Is that all you can say about him?" he asked.

I enumerated a series of reasons that might have accounted for the young man's shabbiness: poor health, bad luck, indolence, indifference to his personal appearance, or the chance that he may have just been released from prison.

Don Juan said that I was merely speculating, and that he was not interested in justifying anything by suggesting that the man was a victim of unconquerable forces.

"Maybe he's a secret agent made to look like a bum," I said jokingly.

The young man walked away towards the street with a disjointed gait.

"He's not made to look like a bum; he is a bum," don Juan said. "Look how weak his body is. His arms and legs are thin. He can hardly walk. No one can pretend to look that way. There is something definitely wrong with him, not his circumstances, though. I have to stress again that I want you to see that man as a *tonal*."

"What does it entail to see a man as a *tonal?*"

"It entails to cease judging him in a moral sense, or excusing him on the grounds that he is like a leaf at the mercy of the wind. In other words, it entails seeing a man without thinking that he is hopeless or helpless.

"You know exactly what I am talking about. You can assess that young man without condemning or forgiving him."

"He drinks too much," I said.

My statement was not volitional. I just made it without really knowing why. For an instant I even felt that someone standing behind me had voiced the words. I was moved to explain that my statement was another of my speculations.

"That was not the case," don Juan said. "Your tone of voice had a certainty that you lacked before. You didn't say, 'Maybe he's a drunkard.' "

I felt embarrassed although I could not exactly determine why. Don Juan laughed.

"You *saw* through the man," he said. "That was *seeing*. *Seeing* is like that. Statements are made with great certainty, and one doesn't know how it happened.

"You know that young man's *tonal* was shot, but you don't know how you know it."

I had to admit that somehow I had had that impression.

"You're right," don Juan said. "It doesn't really matter that he's young, he's as decrepit as the two women. Youth is in no way a barrier against the deterioration of the *tonal*.

"You thought that there might be a great many reasons for that man's condition. I find that there is only one, his *tonal*. It is not that his *tonal* is weak because he drinks; it is the other way around, he drinks because his *tonal* is weak. That weakness forces him to be

what he is. But the same thing happens to all of us, in one form or another."

"But aren't you also justifying his behavior by saying that it's his *tonal?*"

"I'm giving you an explanation that you have never encountered before. It is not a justification or a condemnation, though. That young man's *tonal* is weak and timid. And yet he's not unique. All of us are more or less in the same boat."

At that moment a very large man passed in front of us heading towards the church. He was wearing an expensive dark gray business suit and was carrying a briefcase. The collar of his shirt was unbuttoned and his necktie loose. He was sweating profusely. He had a very light complexion which made the perspiration all the more obvious.

"Watch him!" don Juan ordered me.

The man's steps were small but heavy. There was a wobbling quality to his walking. He did not go up to the church; he circumvented it and disappeared behind it.

"There is no need to treat the body in such an awful manner," don Juan said with a note of scorn. "But the sad fact is that all of us have learned to perfection how to make our *tonal* weak. I have called that indulging."

He put his hand on my notebook and did not let me write any more. His rationale was that as long as I kept on taking notes I was incapable of concentrating. He suggested I should relax, shut off the internal dialogue and let go, merging with the person being observed.

I asked him to explain what he meant by "merging." He said there was no way to explain it, that it was something that the body felt or did when put in observational contact with other bodies. He then clarified the issue by saying that in the past he had called that process "seeing," and that it consisted of a lull of true silence within, followed by an outward elongation of something in the self, an elongation that met and merged with the other body, or with anything within one's field of awareness.

At that point I wanted to get back to my writing pad, but he stopped me and began to single out different people from the crowd that passed by.

He pointed out dozens of persons covering a wide range of types among men, women and children of various ages. Don Juan said that he had selected persons whose weak "tonal" could fit into a categorization scheme, and thus he had acquainted me with a preconceived variety of indulging.

I did not remember all the people he had pointed out and discussed. I complained that if I had taken notes I could have at least sketched out the intricacies of his schemata on indulging. As it was he did not want to repeat it or perhaps he did not remember it either.

He laughed and said that he did not remember it, because in the life of a sorcerer it was the "nagual" that was accountable for creativity.

He looked at the sky and said that it was getting late, and that from that moment on we were going to change direction. Instead of weak "tonals" we were going to wait for the appearance of a "proper tonal." He added that only a warrior had a "proper tonal," and that the average man, at best, could have a "right tonal."

After a few minutes' wait he slapped his thigh and chuckled.

"Look who's coming now," he said, pointing to the street with a movement of his chin. "It is as if they were made to order."

I saw three male Indians approaching. They had on some short brown woolen ponchos, white pants that came to their mid calf, long-sleeved white tops, dirty worn-out sandals and old straw hats. Each of them carried a bundle tied to his back.

Don Juan stood up and went to meet them. He spoke to them. They seemed surprised and surrounded him. They smiled at him. He was apparently telling them something about me; the three of them turned around and smiled at me. They were about ten or twelve feet away; I listened carefully but I could not hear what they were saying.

Don Juan reached in his pocket and handed them some bills. They appeared to be pleased; they moved their feet nervously. I liked them

very much. They looked like children. All of them had small white teeth and very pleasing mild features. One, by all appearances the oldest, had whiskers. His eyes were tired but very kind. He took off his hat and came closer to the bench. The others followed him. The three of them greeted me in unison. We shook hands. Don Juan told me to give them some money. They thanked me and after a polite silence they said good-by. Don Juan sat back down on the bench and we watched them disappear in the crowd.

I told don Juan that for some strange reason I had liked them very much.

"It isn't so strange," he said. "You must've felt that their *tonal* is just right. It is right, but not for our time.

"You probably felt they were like children. They are. And that is very tough. I understand them better than you, thus I couldn't help but feel a tinge of sadness. Indians are like dogs, they have nothing. But that is the nature of their fortune and I shouldn't feel sad. My sadness, of course, is my own way of indulging."

"Where are they from, don Juan?"

"From the Sierras. They've come here to seek their fortune. They want to become merchants. They're brothers. I told them that I also came from the Sierras and I'm a merchant myself. I said that you were my partner. The money we gave them was a token; a warrior should give tokens like that all the time. They no doubt need the money, but need should not be an essential consideration for a token. The thing to look for is feeling. I personally was moved by those three.

"Indians are the losers of our time. Their downfall began with the Spaniards and now under the reign of their descendants the Indians have lost everything. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Indians have lost their *tonal*."

"Is that a metaphor, don Juan?"

"No. It is a fact. The *tonal* is very vulnerable. It cannot withstand maltreatment. The white man, from the day he set foot on this land, has systematically destroyed not only the Indian *tonal* of the time, but also the personal *tonal* of every Indian. One can easily surmise that for the poor average Indian the reign of the white man has been

sheer hell. And yet the irony is that for another kind of Indian it has been sheer bliss."

"Who are you talking about? What kind of Indian is that?"

"The sorcerer. For the sorcerer the Conquest was the challenge of a lifetime. They were the only ones who were not destroyed by it but adapted to it and used it to their ultimate advantage."

"How was that possible, don Juan? I was under the impression that the Spaniards left no stone unturned."

"Let's say that they turned over all the stones that were within the limits of their own *tonal*. In the Indian life, however, there were things that were incomprehensible to the white man; those things he did not even notice. Perhaps it was the sheer luck of the sorcerers, or perhaps it was their knowledge that saved them. After the *tonal* of the time and the personal *tonal* of every Indian was obliterated, the sorcerers found themselves holding on to the only thing left uncontested, the *nagual*. In other words, their *tonal* took refuge in their *nagual*. This couldn't have happened had it not been for the excruciating conditions of a vanquished people. The men of knowledge of today are the product of those conditions and are the ultimate connoisseurs of the *nagual* since they were left there thoroughly alone. There, the white man has never ventured. In fact, he doesn't even have the idea it exists."

I felt compelled at that point to present an argument. I sincerely contended that in European thought we had accounted for what he called the "nagual." I brought in the concept of the Transcendental Ego, or the unobserved observer present in all our thoughts, perceptions and feelings. I explained to don Juan that the individual could perceive or intuit himself, as a self, through the Transcendental Ego, because this was the only thing capable of judgment, capable of disclosing reality within the realm of its consciousness.

Don Juan was unruffled. He laughed.

"Disclosing reality," he said, mimicking me. "That's the *tonal*."

I argued that the "tonal" may be called the Empirical Ego found in one's passing stream of consciousness or experience, while the Transcendental Ego was found behind that stream.

"Watching, I suppose," he said mockingly.

"That's right. Watching itself," I said.

"I hear you talking," he said. "But you're saying nothing. The *nagual* is not experience or intuition or consciousness. Those terms and everything else you may care to say are only items on the island of the *tonal*. The *nagual*, on the other hand, is only effect. The *tonal* begins at birth and ends at death, but the *nagual* never ends. The *nagual* has no limit. I've said that the *nagual* is where power hovers; that was only a way of alluding to it. By reasons of its effect, perhaps the *nagual* can be best understood in terms of power. For instance, when you felt numb and couldn't talk earlier today, I was actually soothing you; that is, my *nagual* was acting upon you."

"How was that possible, don Juan?"

"You won't believe this, but no one knows how. All I know is that I wanted your undivided attention and then my *nagual* went to work on you. I know that much because I can witness its effect, but I don't know how it works."

He was quiet for a while. I wanted to keep on the same topic. I attempted to ask a question; he silenced me.

"One can say that the *nagual* accounts for creativity," he finally said and looked at me piercingly. "The *nagual* is the only part of us that can create."

He remained quiet, looking at me. I felt he was definitely leading me into an area I had wished he would elucidate further. He had said that the "tonal" did not create anything, but only witnessed and assessed. I asked how he explained the fact that we construct superb structures and machines.

"That's not creativity," he said. "That's only molding. We can mold anything with our hands, personally or in conjunction with the hands of other *tonals*. A group of *tonals* can mold anything, superb structures as you said."

"But what's creativity then, don Juan?"

He stared at me, squinting his eyes. He chuckled softly, lifted his right hand over his head and twisted his wrist with a sharp jerk, as if he were turning a door knob.

"Creativity is this," he said and brought his hand with a cupped palm to the level of my eyes.

It took me an incredibly long time to focus my eyes on his hand. I felt that a transparent membrane was holding my whole body in a fixed position and that I had to break it in order to place my sight on his hand.

I struggled until beads of perspiration ran into my eyes. Finally I heard or felt a pop and my eyes and head jerked free.

On his right palm there was the most curious rodent I had ever seen. It looked like a bushy-tailed squirrel. The tail, however, was more like a porcupine's. It had stiff quills.

"Touch it!" don Juan said softly.

I automatically obeyed him and ran my finger on its soft back. Don Juan brought his hand closer to my eyes and then I noticed something that threw me into nervous spasms. The squirrel had eyeglasses and big teeth.

"It looks like a Japanese," I said and began to laugh hysterically.

The rodent then started to grow in don Juan's palm. And while my eyes were still filled with tears of laughter, the rodent became so enormous that it disappeared. It literally went out of the frame of my vision. It happened so rapidly that I was caught in the middle of a spasm of laughter. When I looked again, or when I wiped my eyes and focused them properly, I was looking at don Juan. He was sitting on the bench and I was standing in front of him, although I did not remember having stood up.

For a moment my nervousness was uncontainable. Don Juan calmly got up, forced me to sit, propped my chin between the bicep and forearm of his left arm and hit me on the very top of my head with the knuckles of his right hand. The effect was like the jolt of an electric current. It calmed me down immediately.

There were so many things that I wanted to ask. But my words could not wade through all those thoughts. I then became keenly aware that I had lost control over my vocal cords. I did not want to struggle to speak, however, and leaned against the back of the bench. Don Juan said forcefully that I had to pull myself together and stop indulging. I felt a bit dizzy. He imperatively ordered me to write my notes and handed me my pad and pencil after picking them up from underneath the bench.

I made a supreme effort to say something and again I had the clear sensation that a membrane was enveloping me. I puffed and groaned for a moment, while don Juan laughed, until I heard or felt another pop.

I began to write immediately. Don Juan spoke as if he were dictating to me.

"One of the acts of a warrior is never to let anything affect him," he said. "Thus, a warrior may be seeing the devil himself, but he won't let anyone know that. The control of a warrior has to be impeccable."

He waited until I had finished writing and then asked me laughingly, "Did you get all that?"

I suggested that we should go to a restaurant and have dinner. I was famished. He said that we had to stay until the "proper tonal" appeared. He added in a serious tone that if the "proper tonal" did not come that day we had to remain on the bench until it cared to show up.

"What is a *proper tonal?*" I asked.

"A *tonal* that is just right, balanced and harmonious. You are supposed to find one today, or rather your power is supposed to bring one to us."

"But how can I tell it apart from other *tonals?*"

"Never mind that. I will point it out to you."

"What is it like, don Juan?"

"Hard to tell. It depends on you. This is a show for you, therefore you will set up those conditions yourself."

"How?"

"I don't know that. Your power, your *nagual*, will do that.

"There are, roughly speaking, two sides to every *tonal*. One is the outer part, the fringe, the surface of the island. That's the part related to action and acting, the rugged side. The other part is the decision and judgment, the inner *tonal*, softer, more delicate and more complex.

"The *proper tonal* is a *tonal* where the two levels are in perfect harmony and balance."

Don Juan stopped talking. It was fairly dark by then and I had a

hard time taking notes. He told me to stretch and relax. He said that it had been quite an exhausting day but very prolific and that he was sure the "proper tonal" would show up.

Dozens of people went by. We sat in a relaxed silence for ten or fifteen minutes. Then don Juan stood up abruptly.

"By golly you've done it! Look what's coming there. A girl!"

He pointed with a nod of his head to a young woman who was crossing the park and was approaching the vicinity of our bench. Don Juan said that that young woman was the "proper tonal" and that if she would stop to talk to either one of us it would be an extraordinary omen and we would have to do whatever she wanted.

I could not clearly distinguish the young woman's features, although there was still enough light. She came within a couple of feet but went by without looking at us. Don Juan ordered me in a whisper to get up and go talk to her.

I ran after her and asked for directions. I got very close to her. She was young, perhaps in her mid-twenties, of medium height, very attractive and well-groomed. Her eyes were clear and peaceful. She smiled at me as I spoke. There was something winning about her. I liked her as much as I had liked the three Indians.

I went back to the bench and sat down.

"Is she a warrior?" I asked.

"Not quite," don Juan said. "Your power is not that keen yet to bring a warrior. But she's a just right *tonal*. One that could turn into a *proper tonal*. Warriors come from that stock."

His statements aroused my curiosity. I asked him if women could be warriors. He looked at me, apparently baffled by my question.

"Of course they can," he said, "and they are even better equipped for the path of knowledge than men. But then men are a bit more resilient. I would say, however, that, all in all, women have a slight advantage."

I said that it puzzled me that we had never talked about women in relation to his knowledge.

"You're a man," he said, "therefore I use the masculine gender when I talk to you. That's all. The rest is the same."

I wanted to question him further but he made a gesture to close the topic. He looked up. The sky was almost black. The banks of clouds looked extremely dark. There were still, however, some areas where the clouds were slightly orange.

"The end of the day is your best time," don Juan said. "The appearance of that young woman at the very edge of the day is an omen. We were talking about the *tonal*, therefore it is an omen about your *tonal*."

"What does the omen mean, don Juan?"

"It means that you have very little time left to organize your arrangements. Any arrangements that you might have constructed have to be viable arrangements because you don't have time to make new ones. Your arrangements must work now, or they are not arrangements at all.

"I suggest that when you go back home you check your lines and make sure they are strong. You will need them."

"What's going to happen to me, don Juan?"

"Years ago you bid for power. You have followed the hardships of learning faithfully, without fretting or rushing. You are now at the edge of the day."

"What does that mean?"

"For a *proper tonal* everything on the island of the *tonal* is a challenge. Another way of saying it is that for a warrior everything in this world is a challenge. The greatest challenge of all, of course, is his bid for power. But power comes from the *nagual*, and when a warrior finds himself at the edge of the day it means that the hour of the *nagual* is approaching, the warrior's hour of power."

"I still don't understand the meaning of all this, don Juan. Does it mean that I am going to die soon?"

"If you're stupid, you will," he retorted cuttingly. "But putting it in milder terms, it means that you're about to shiver in your pants. You bid for power once and that bidding is irreversible. I won't say that you're about to fulfill your destiny, because there is no destiny. The only thing that one can say then is that you're about to fulfill your power. The omen was clear. That young woman came to you at

the edge of the day. You have little time left, and none of it for crap. A fine state. I would say that the best of us always comes out when we are against the wall, when we feel the sword dangling overhead. Personally, I wouldn't have it any other way."

SHRINKING THE TONAL

On Wednesday morning I left my hotel around nine forty-five. I walked slowly, allowing myself fifteen minutes to reach the place where don Juan and I had agreed to meet. He had picked a corner on the Paseo de la Reforma, five or six blocks away, in front of the ticket office of an airline.

I had just finished eating breakfast with a friend of mine. He had wanted to walk with me but I had insinuated that I was going to meet a girl. I deliberately walked on the opposite side of the street from where the airline office was. I had the nagging suspicion that my friend, who had always wanted me to introduce him to don Juan, knew that I was going to meet him and might be following me. I was afraid that if I turned around I would find him behind me.

I saw don Juan at a magazine stand, on the other side of the street. I started to cross over but had to stop on the divider and wait there until it was safe to walk all the way across the wide boulevard. I turned around casually to see if my friend was following me. He was standing on the corner behind me. He smiled sheepishly and waved his hand, as if telling me that he had been incapable of controlling himself. I dashed across the street without giving him time to catch up with me.

Don Juan seemed to be aware of my predicament. When I reached him, he gave a furtive glance over my shoulder.

"He's coming," he said. "We'd better go down the side street."

He pointed to a street which cut diagonally into the Paseo de la

Reforma at the point where we were standing. I quickly oriented myself. I had never been on that street, but two days before I had been in the airline ticket office. I knew its peculiar layout. The office was on the pointed corner made by the two streets. It had a door opening onto each street, and the distance between the two doors must have been about ten to twelve feet. There was an aisle through the office from door to door, and one could easily go from one street to the other. There were desks on one side of that pathway and a large round counter with clerks and cashiers on the other side. The day I had been there, the place had been filled with people.

I wanted to hurry up, perhaps even run, but don Juan's pace was relaxed. As we reached the office door, on the diagonal street, I knew, without having to turn around, that my friend had also run across the boulevard and was about to turn into the street where we were walking. I looked at don Juan, hoping that he had a solution. He shrugged his shoulders. I felt annoyed and could not think of anything myself, short of punching my friend in the nose. I must have sighed or exhaled at that very moment, because the next thing I felt was sudden loss of air due to a formidable shove that don Juan had given me, which sent me whirling through the door of the airline office. Propelled by his tremendous push, I practically flew into the room. Don Juan had caught me so unprepared that my body had not offered any resistance; my fright merged with the actual jolt of his thrust. I automatically put my arms in front of me to protect my face. The force of don Juan's shove had been so great that saliva flew out of my mouth and I experienced a mild vertigo as I stumbled inside the room. I nearly lost my balance and had to make a supreme effort not to fall down. I twirled around a couple of times; it seemed that the speed of my movements made the scene blurry. I vaguely noticed a crowd of customers conducting their business. I felt extremely embarrassed. I knew that everyone was looking at me as I reeled across the room. The idea that I was making a fool out of myself was more than discomforting. A series of thoughts flashed through my mind. I had the certainty that I was going to fall on my face. Or I would bump into a customer, perhaps an old lady, who

would be injured by the impact. Or worse yet, the glass door at the other end would be closed and I would smash against it.

In a dazed state I reached the door to the Paseo de la Reforma. It was open and I stepped out. My preoccupation of the moment was that I had to keep cool, turn to my right and walk on the boulevard towards downtown as if nothing had happened. I was sure that don Juan would join me and that perhaps my friend might have kept on walking along the diagonal street.

I opened my eyes, or rather I focused them on the area in front of me. I had a long moment of numbness before I fully realized what had happened. I was not on the Paseo de la Reforma, as I should have been, but in the Lagunilla market one and a half miles away.

What I experienced at the moment of that realization was such an intense astonishment that all I could do was stare, stupefied.

I looked around in order to orient myself. I realized that I was actually standing very close to where I had met don Juan on my first day in Mexico City. Perhaps I was even on the same spot. The stands that sold old coins were five feet away. I made a supreme effort to take hold of myself. Obviously I had to be experiencing a hallucination. It could not possibly be any other way. I quickly turned to go back through the door into the office, but behind me there was only a row of stands with secondhand books and magazines. Don Juan was standing next to me, to my right. He had an enormous smile on his face.

There was a pressure in my head, a tickling feeling, as if carbonated soda were going through my nose. I was speechless. I tried to say something without success.

I clearly heard don Juan say that I should not try to talk or think, but I wanted to say something, anything. An awful nervousness was building up inside my chest. I felt tears rolling down my cheeks.

Don Juan did not shake me, as he usually does when I fall prey to an uncontrollable fear. Instead he patted me gently on the head.

"Now, now, little Carlos," he said. "Don't lose your marbles."

He held my face in his hands for an instant.

"Don't try to talk," he said.

He let my face go and pointed to what was taking place all around us.

"This is not for talking," he said. "This is only for watching. Watch! Watch everything!"

I was really crying. My reaction to my crying was very strange, however; I kept on weeping without any concern. It did not matter to me, at that moment, whether or not I was making a fool out of myself.

I looked around. Right in front of me there was a middle-aged man wearing a pink short-sleeved shirt and dark gray pants. He seemed to be an American. A chubby woman, apparently his wife, was holding on to his arm. The man was handling some coins, while a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old boy, perhaps the son of the proprietor, watched him. The boy followed every movement the older man made. Finally, the man put the coins back on the table and the boy immediately relaxed.

"Watch everything!" don Juan demanded again.

There was nothing unusual to watch. People were passing by, going in every direction. I turned around. A man, who appeared to run the magazine stand, was staring at me. He blinked repeatedly as if he were about to fall asleep. He seemed tired or sick and looked seedy.

I felt that there was nothing to watch, at least nothing of real consequence. I stared at the scene. I found that it was impossible to concentrate my attention on anything. Don Juan walked in a circle around me. He acted as if he were assessing something in me. He shook his head and puckered his lips.

"Come, come," he said, grabbing me gently by the arm. "It's time to walk."

As soon as we began to move I noticed that my body was very light. In fact, I felt that the soles of my feet were spongy. They had a peculiar rubbery, springing quality.

Don Juan must have been aware of my sensations; he held me tightly, as if not to let me escape; he pressed down on me, as though he were afraid I would move upwards beyond his reach, like a balloon.

Walking made me feel better. My nervousness gave way to a comfortable easiness.

Don Juan insisted again that I should observe everything. I told him that there was nothing I wanted to watch, that it made no difference to me what people were doing in the market, and that I did not want to feel like an idiot dutifully observing some moronic activity of someone buying coins and old books, while the real thing was escaping through my fingers.

"What is the real thing?" he asked.

I stopped walking and vehemently told him that the important thing was whatever he had done to make me perceive that I had covered the distance between the ticket office and the market in seconds.

At that point I began to shiver and felt I was going to get ill. Don Juan made me put my hands against my stomach.

He pointed all around him and stated again, in a matter-of-fact tone, that the mundane activity around us was the only thing of importance.

I felt annoyed with him. I had the physical feeling of spinning. I took a deep breath.

"What did you do, don Juan?" I asked with forced casualness.

With a reassuring tone he said that he could tell me about that any time, but that whatever was happening all around me was not ever going to be repeated. I had no quarrel with that. The activity I was witnessing obviously could not be repeated again in all its complexity. My point was that I could observe a very similar activity any time. On the other hand, the implication of having been transported over the distance, in whatever form, was of immeasurable significance.

When I voiced these opinions don Juan made his head shiver as if what he had heard me say was actually painful to him.

We walked in silence for a moment. My body was feverish. I noticed that the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet were burning hot. The same unusual heat also seemed to be localized in my nostrils and eyelids.

"What did you do, don Juan?" I asked him pleadingly.

He did not answer me but patted me on the chest and laughed. He

said that men were very frail creatures, who made themselves even more frail with their indulging. In a very serious tone he exhorted me not to feel that I was about to perish but to push myself beyond my limits and to simply engage my attention on the world around me.

We continued walking at a very slow pace. My preoccupation was paramount. I could not pay attention to anything. Don Juan stopped and seemed to deliberate whether or not to speak. He opened his mouth to say something, but then he appeared to change his mind and we began to walk again.

"What happened is that you came here," he said abruptly as he turned and stared at me.

"How did that happen?"

He said that he did not know, and that the only thing he did know was that I had selected that place myself.

Our impasse became even more hopeless as we kept on talking. I wanted to know the steps and he insisted that the selection of the place was the only thing we could discuss, and since I did not know why I had chosen it, there was essentially nothing to talk about. He criticized, without getting angry, my obsession to reason out everything as an unnecessary indulging. He said that it was simpler and more effective just to act, without seeking explanations, and that by talking about my experience and by thinking about it I was dissipating it.

After a few moments he said that we had to leave that place because I had spoiled it and it would become increasingly injurious to me.

We left the market and walked to the Alameda Park. I was exhausted. I plunked down on a bench. It was only then that it occurred to me to look at my watch. It was 10:20 A.M. I had to make quite an effort in order to focus my attention. I did not remember the exact time when I had met don Juan. I calculated that it must have been around ten. And it could not have taken us more than ten minutes to walk from the market to the park, which left only ten minutes unaccounted for.

I told don Juan about my calculations. He smiled. I had the certainty that his smile hid his contempt for me, yet there was nothing in his face to betray that feeling.

"You think I'm a hopeless idiot, don't you, don Juan?"

"Ah ha!" he said and jumped to his feet.

His reaction was so unexpected that I also jumped up at the same time.

"Tell me exactly what you think my feelings are," he said emphatically.

I felt I knew his feelings. It was as if I were feeling them myself. But when I tried to say what I felt, I realized I could not talk about it. To speak required a tremendous effort.

Don Juan said that I did not have enough power yet to "see" him. But I could certainly "see" enough to find myself suitable explanations for what was happening.

"Don't be bashful," he said. "Tell me exactly what you *see*."

I had a sudden and strange thought, very similar to thoughts that usually come to my mind just before falling asleep. It was more than a thought; a complete image would be a better description of it. I saw a tableau containing various personages. The one which was directly in front of me was a man sitting behind a window frame. The area beyond the frame was diffuse, but the frame and the man were crystal clear. He was looking at me; his head was turned slightly to his left, so he was actually looking askance at me. I could see his eyes moving to keep me within focus. He was leaning on the windowsill with his right elbow. His hand was clenched into a fist and his muscles were contracted.

To the left of the man there was another image in the tableau. It was a flying lion. That is, the head and the mane were those of a lion but the lower part of its body belonged to a curly white French poodle.

I was about to focus my attention on it, when the man made a smacking sound with his lips and stuck his head and trunk out of the window. His whole body emerged as if something were pushing him. He hung for a moment, grabbing the windowsill with the tips

of his fingers as he swung like a pendulum. Then he let go.

I experienced in my own body the sensation of falling. It was not a plummeting down, but a soft descent, and then a cushioned floating. The man was weightless. He remained stationary for a moment and then he went out of sight as if an uncontrollable force had sipped him away through a crack in the tableau. An instant later he was back at the window looking askance at me. His right forearm was resting on the windowsill, only this time his hand was waving good-by to me.

Don Juan's comment was that my "seeing" was too elaborate.

"You can do better than that," he said. "You want me to explain what happened. Well, I want you to use your *seeing* to do that. You *saw*, but you *saw* crap. That kind of information is useless to a warrior. It would take too long to figure out what's what. *Seeing* must be direct, for a warrior can't use his time to unravel what he himself is *seeing*. *Seeing* is *seeing* because it cuts through all that nonsense."

I asked him if he thought that my vision had only been a hallucination and not really "seeing." He was convinced it had been "seeing" because of the intricacy of detail, but that it was inappropriate for the occasion.

"Do you think that my visions explain anything?" I asked.

"Sure they do. But I wouldn't try to unravel them if I were you. In the beginning *seeing* is confusing and it's easy to get lost in it. As the warrior gets tighter, however, his *seeing* becomes what it should be, a direct knowing."

As don Juan spoke I had one of those peculiar lapses of feelings and I clearly sensed that I was about to unveil something which I already knew, a thing which eluded me by turning into something very blurry. I became aware that I was involved in a struggle. The more I tried to define or reach that elusive piece of knowledge the deeper it sank.

"That *seeing* was too . . . too visionary," don Juan said.

The sound of his voice shook me.

"A warrior asks a question, and through his *seeing* he gets an answer, but the answer is simple, never embellished to the point of flying French poodles."

We laughed at the image. And half jokingly I told him that he was too strict, that anyone going through what I had gone through that morning deserved a bit of leniency.

"That is the easy way out," he said. "That is the indulging way. You hinge the world on the feeling that everything is too much for you. You're not living like a warrior."

I told him that there were so many facets of what he called a warrior's way that it was impossible to fulfill all of them, and that the meaning of it became clear only as I encountered new instances where I had to apply it.

"A rule of thumb for a warrior," he said, "is that he makes his decisions so carefully that nothing that may happen as a result of them can surprise him, much less drain his power.

"To be a warrior means to be humble and alert. Today you were supposed to watch the scene which was unfolding in front of your eyes, not to ponder how all that was possible. You focused your attention on the wrong place. If I wanted to be lenient with you I could easily say that since this was the first time it had happened to you, you were not prepared. But that's not permissible, because you came here as a warrior, ready to die; therefore, what happened to you today shouldn't have caught you with your pants down."

I conceded that my tendency was to indulge in fear and bewilderment.

"Let's say that a rule of thumb for you should be that when you come to see me you should come prepared to die," he said. "If you come here ready to die, there shouldn't be any pitfalls, or any unwelcome surprises, or any unnecessary acts. Everything should gently fall into place because you're expecting nothing."

"That's easy to say, don Juan. I am on the receiving end, though. I am the one who has to live with all this."

"It is not that you have to live with all this. You are all this. You're not just tolerating it for the time being. Your decision to join forces with this evil world of sorcery should have burned all the lingering feelings of confusion and should give you the spunk to claim all this as your world."

I felt embarrassed and sad. Don Juan's actions, no matter how

prepared I was, taxed me in such a way that every time I came in contact with him I was left with no other recourse but to act and feel like a half-rational, nagging person. I had a surge of wrath and did not want to write any more. At that moment I wanted to rip my notes and throw everything in the trash can. And I would have done that had it not been for don Juan, who laughed and held my arm, restraining me.

In a mocking tone he said that my "tonal" was about to fool itself again. He recommended that I should go to the fountain and splash water on my neck and ears.

The water soothed me. We were quiet for a long time.

"Write, write," don Juan coaxed me in a friendly tone. "Let's say that your notebook is the only sorcery you have. To rip it up is another way of opening yourself to your death. It will be another of your tantrums, a flashy tantrum at best, not a change. A warrior doesn't ever leave the island of the *tonal*. He uses it."

He pointed all around me with a quick movement of his hand and then touched my notebook.

"This is your world. You can't renounce it. It is useless to get angry and feel disappointed with oneself. All that that proves is that one's *tonal* is involved in an internal battle; a battle within one's *tonal* is one of the most inane contests I can think of. The tight life of a warrior is designed to end that struggle. From the beginning I have taught you to avoid wear and tear. Now there is no longer a war within you, not as it used to be, because the warrior's way is harmony—the harmony between actions and decisions, at first, and then the harmony between *tonal* and *nagual*.

"Throughout the time I have known you, I have talked to both your *tonal* and your *nagual*. That is the way the instruction should be conducted.

"In the beginning, one has to talk to the *tonal*. It is the *tonal* that has to relinquish control. But it should be made to do so gladly. For example, your *tonal* has relinquished some controls without much struggle, because it became clear to it that, had it remained the way it was, the totality of you would be dead by now. In other words, the *tonal* is made to give up unnecessary things like self-importance and

indulging, which only plunge it into boredom. The whole trouble is that the *tonal* clings to those things when it should be glad to rid itself of that crap. The task then is to convince the *tonal* to become free and fluid. That's what a sorcerer needs before anything else, a strong, free *tonal*. The stronger it gets the less it clings to its doings, and the easier it is to shrink it. So what happened this morning was that I saw the opportunity to shrink your *tonal*. For an instant, you were absent-minded, hurrying, not thinking, and I grabbed that moment to shove you.

"The *tonal* shrinks at given times, especially when it is embarrassed. In fact, one of the features of the *tonal* is its shyness. Its shyness is not really an issue. But there are certain instances when the *tonal* is taken by surprise, and its shyness unavoidably makes it shrink.

"This morning I plucked my cubic centimeter of chance. I noticed the open door of that office and gave you a shove. A shove is then the technique for shrinking the *tonal*. One must shove at the precise instant; for that, of course, one must know how to *see*.

"Once the man has been shoved and his *tonal* has shrunk, his *nagual*, if it is already in motion, no matter how small this motion is, will take over and achieve extraordinary deeds. Your *nagual* took over this morning and you ended up in the market."

He remained silent for a moment. He seemed to be waiting for questions. We looked at each other.

"I really don't know how," he said as if reading my mind. "All I know is that the *nagual* is capable of inconceivable feats.

"This morning I asked you to watch. That scene in front of you, whatever it may have been, had an incalculable value for you. But instead of following my advice, you indulged in self-pity and confusion and did not watch.

"For a while you were all *nagual* and could not talk. That was the time to watch. Then, little by little, your *tonal* took over again; and rather than plunging you into a deadly battle between your *tonal* and *nagual*, I walked you here."

"What was there in that scene, don Juan? What was so important?"

"I don't know. It wasn't happening to me."

"What do you mean?"

"It was your experience, not mine."

"But you were with me. Weren't you?"

"No. I wasn't. You were alone. I repeatedly told you to watch everything, because that scene was only for you."

"But you were next to me, don Juan."

"No. I wasn't. But it's useless to talk about it. Whatever I may say doesn't make sense, because during those moments we were in *nagual*'s time. The affairs of the *nagual* can be witnessed only with the body, not the reason."

"If you were not with me, don Juan, who or what was the person I witnessed as you?"

"It was me and yet I wasn't there."

"Where were you then?"

"I was with you, but not there. Let's say that I was around you but not in the particular place where your *nagual* had taken you."

"You mean you didn't know that we were at the market?"

"No, I didn't. I just tagged along in order not to lose you."

"This is truly awesome, don Juan."

"We were in *nagual*'s time, and there is nothing awesome about it. We are capable of much more than that. That is the nature of us as luminous beings. Our flaw is to insist on remaining on our monotonous, tiring, but convenient island. The *tonal* is the villain and it shouldn't be."

I described the little bit I remembered. He wanted to know if I had witnessed any features of the sky, such as daylight, clouds, the sun. Or if I had heard noises of any sort. Or if I had caught sight of unusual people or events. He wanted to know if there had been any fights. Or if people were yelling, and if they were, what they had said.

I could not answer any of his questions. The plain truth was that I had accepted the event at its apparent face value, admitting as a truism that I had "flown" over a considerable distance in one or two seconds, and that thanks to don Juan's knowledge, whatever it may

have been, I had landed in all my material corporeality inside the market.

My reactions were a direct corollary of such an interpretation. I wanted to know the procedures, the member's knowledge, the "how to do it." Therefore, I did not care to observe what I was convinced were the ordinary happenings of a mundane event.

"Do you think that people saw me in the market?" I asked.

Don Juan did not answer. He laughed and tapped me lightly with his fist.

I tried to remember if I had actually had any physical contact with people. My memory failed me.

"What did the people in the airline office see when I stumbled in?" I asked.

"They probably saw a man staggering from one door to the other."

"But did they see me disappear into thin air?"

"That is taken care of by the *nagual*. I don't know how. All I can tell you is that we are fluid, luminous beings made out of fibers. The agreement that we are solid objects is the *tonal*'s doing. When the *nagual* shrinks, extraordinary things are possible. But they are only extraordinary for the *tonal*.

"For the *nagual*, it's nothing to move the way you did this morning. Especially for your *nagual*, which is already capable of difficult ploys. As a matter of fact, it has plunged into something terribly weird. Can you feel what it is?"

A million questions and feelings came to me all at once. It was as if a gust of wind had blown off my veneer of composure. I shivered. My body felt it was at the edge of an abyss. I struggled with some mysterious but concrete piece of knowledge. It was as if I were on the verge of being shown something, and yet some stubborn part of me insisted on blowing a cloud over it. The struggle made me numb by degrees, until I could not feel my body. My mouth was open and my eyes were half closed. I had the feeling I could see my face getting harder and harder until it was the face of a dried corpse with the yellowish skin stuck tight to the skull.

The next thing I felt was a jolt. Don Juan was standing by me holding an empty bucket of water. He had soaked me. I coughed and wiped the water from my face and felt another cold seizure in my back. I jumped up from the bench. Don Juan had poured some water down my neck.

There was a group of children looking at me and laughing. Don Juan smiled at me. He held my notebook and said that we had better go to my hotel so I could change my clothes. He led me out of the park. We stood on the curb for a moment before a cab came along.

Hours later, after eating lunch and resting, don Juan and I sat on his favorite bench in the park by the church. In an oblique manner we got to the topic of my strange reaction. He seemed to be very cautious. He did not confront me directly with it.

"Things like that are known to happen," he said. "The *nagual*, once it learns to surface, may cause a great damage to the *tonal* by coming out without any control. Your case is special, though. You are given to indulging in such an exaggerated manner that you would die and not even mind it, or worse yet, not even be aware that you're dying."

I told him that my reaction began when he had asked me if I could feel what my "nagual" had done I thought I knew exactly what he was alluding to, but when I tried to describe what it was, I found I could not think clearly. I experienced a sensation of lightheadedness, almost an indifference, as if I did not really care about anything. Then that sensation grew into a mesmerizing concentration. It was as though all of me was slowly being sucked out. What attracted and trapped my attention was the clear sensation that a portentous secret was about to be revealed to me and I did not want anything to interfere with such a revelation.

"What was going to be revealed to you was your death," don Juan said. "That's the danger of indulging. Especially for you, since you are naturally so exaggerated. Your *tonal* is so given to indulging that it threatens the totality of you. This is a terrible way of being."

"What can I do?"

"Your *tonal* has to be convinced with reasons, your *nagual* with ac-

tions, until one props the other. As I have told you, the *tonal* rules, and yet it is very vulnerable. The *nagual*, on the other hand, never, or almost never, acts out; but when it does, it terrifies the *tonal*.

"This morning your *tonal* got frightened and began to shrink by itself, and then your *nagual* began to take over.

"I had to borrow a bucket from one of the photographers in the park in order to whip your *nagual* like a bad dog back to its place. The *tonal* must be protected at any cost. The crown has to be taken away from it, but it must remain as the protected overseer.

"Any threat to the *tonal* always results in its death. And if the *tonal* dies, so does the whole man. Because of its inherent weakness the *tonal* is easily destroyed, and thus one of the balancing arts of the warrior is to make the *nagual* emerge in order to prop up the *tonal*. I say it is an art, because sorcerers know that only by boosting the *tonal* can the *nagual* emerge. See what I mean? That boosting is called personal power."

Don Juan stood up, stretched his arms and arched his back. I started to stand up myself, but he gently pushed me down.

"You must stay on this bench until twilight," he said. "I have to leave right away. Genaro is waiting for me in the mountains. So come to his house in three days and we will meet there."

"What are we going to do at don Genaro's house?" I asked.

"Depending on whether you have enough power," he said, "Genaro may show you the *nagual*."

There was one more thing that I had to voice at that point. I had to know whether his suit was a shocking device for me alone or was it actually part of his life. Never had any of his acts caused so much havoc in me as his wearing a suit. It was not only the act in itself that was so awesome to me, but the fact that don Juan was elegant. His legs had a youthful agility. It was as if wearing shoes had shifted his point of balance and his steps were longer and more firm than usual.

"Do you wear a suit all the time?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied with a charming smile. "I have others, but I didn't want to wear a different suit today, because it would've scared you even more."

I did not know what to think. I felt that I had arrived at the end of my path. If don Juan could wear a suit and be elegant in it, anything was possible.

He seemed to enjoy my confusion and laughed.

"I'm a stockholder," he said in a mysterious but unaffected tone and walked away.

The next morning, on Thursday, I asked a friend of mine to walk with me from the door of the office where don Juan had pushed me to the Lagunilla market. We took the most direct route. It took us thirty-five minutes. Once we arrived there, I tried to orient myself. I failed. I walked into a clothing store at the very corner of the wide avenue where we were standing.

"Pardon me," I said to a young woman who was gently cleaning a hat with a duster. "Where are the stands of coins and secondhand books?"

"We don't have any," she said in a nasty tone.

"But I saw them, somewhere in this market, yesterday."

"No kidding," she said and walked behind the counter.

I ran after her and pleaded with her to tell me where they were. She looked me up and down.

"You couldn't have seen them yesterday," she said. "Those stands are assembled only on Sunday, right here along this wall. We don't have them the rest of the week."

"Only on Sunday?" I repeated mechanically.

"Yes. Only on Sunday. That's the way. The rest of the week they would interfere with the traffic."

She pointed to the wide avenue filled with cars.

IN NAGUAL'S TIME

I ran up a slope in front of don Genaro's house and saw don Juan and don Genaro sitting on a cleared area by the door. They smiled at me. There was such warmth and innocence in their smiles that my body experienced a state of immediate alarm. I automatically slowed down to a walk. I greeted them.

"How are you?" don Genaro asked me in such an affected tone that we all laughed.

"He's in very good shape," don Juan interjected before I could answer.

"I can see that," don Genaro retorted. "Look at that double chin! And look at those chunks of bacon fat on the jowls!"

Don Juan held his stomach as he laughed.

"Your face is round," don Genaro went on. "What have you been doing? Eating?"

Don Juan jokingly assured him that my life style required that I eat a great deal. In a most friendly way they teased me about my life, and then don Juan asked me to sit down between them. The sun had already set behind the huge range of mountains to the west.

"Where's your famous notebook?" don Genaro asked me, and when I got it out of my pocket he yelled, "Yippee!" and took it from my hands.

Obviously he had observed me with great care and knew my mannerisms to perfection. He held the notebook with both hands and played with it nervously, as if he did not know what to do with it.

Twice he seemed to be on the verge of throwing it away but appeared to contain himself. Then he held it against his knees and pretended to write feverishly in it, the way I do.

Don Juan laughed so hard that he was about to choke.

"What did you do after I left you?" don Juan asked after they had quieted down.

"I went to the market on Thursday," I said.

"What were you doing there? Retracing your steps?" he retorted.

Don Genaro fell backwards and with his lips made the dry sound of a head hitting the ground. He looked at me askance and winked.

"I had to do it," I said. "And I found out that on weekdays there are no stands that sell coins and secondhand books."

Both of them laughed. Then don Juan said that asking questions was not going to reveal anything new.

"What really took place, don Juan?" I asked.

"Believe me, there is no way of knowing that," he said dryly. "In those matters you and I are on equal ground. My advantage over you at this moment is that I know how to get to the *nagual*, and you don't. But once I have gotten there I have no more advantage and no more knowledge than you."

"Did I really land in the market, don Juan?" I asked.

"Of course. I've told you, the *nagual* is at the warrior's command. Isn't it so, Genaro?"

"Right!" don Genaro exclaimed in a booming voice and stood up in one single motion. It was as though his voice had pulled him from a lying position to a perfectly vertical one.

Don Juan was practically rolling on the ground laughing. Don Genaro, with a nonchalant air, took a comical bow and said good-by.

"Genaro will see you tomorrow morning," don Juan said. "Now you must sit here in total silence."

We did not say another word. After hours of silence I fell asleep.

I looked at my watch. It was almost six in the morning. Don Juan examined the solid mass of heavy white clouds over the eastern horizon and concluded that it was going to be an overcast day. Don

Genaro sniffed the air and added that it was also going to be hot and windless.

"How far are we going?" I asked.

"To those eucalyptus trees over there," don Genaro replied, pointing to what seemed to be a grove of trees about a mile away.

When we reached the trees I realized that it was not a grove; the eucalyptus had been planted in straight lines in order to mark the boundaries of fields cultivated with different crops. We walked along the edge of a corn field, along a line of enormous trees, thin and straight, over a hundred feet high, and arrived at an empty field. I figured that the crop must have just been harvested. There were only the dried stalks and leaves of some plants I did not recognize. I bent over to pick up a leaf but don Genaro stopped me. He held my arm with great force. I recoiled in pain and then I noticed that he had only placed his fingers gently on my arm.

He was definitely aware of what he had done and of what I was experiencing. He swiftly lifted his fingers off my arm and then again placed them gently on it. He repeated it once more and laughed like a delighted child when I winced. Then he turned his profile to me. His aquiline nose made him look like a bird, a bird with strange long white teeth.

In a soft voice don Juan told me not to touch anything. I asked him if he knew what kind of crop had been cultivated there. He seemed to be about to tell me, but don Genaro interceded and said that it was a field of worms.

Don Juan looked at me fixedly, without cracking a smile. Don Genaro's meaningless answer appeared to be a joke. I waited for a cue to start laughing, but they just stared at me.

"A field of gorgeous worms," don Genaro said. "Yes, what was grown here was the most delightful worms you've ever seen."

He turned to don Juan. They looked at each other for an instant.

"Isn't it so?" he asked.

"Absolutely true," don Juan said, and turning to me he added in a soft voice, "Genaro holds the baton today; only he can tell what's what, so do exactly as he says."

The idea that don Genaro had the control filled me with terror. I turned to don Juan to tell him about it; but before I had time to voice my words, don Genaro let out a long formidable scream; a yell so loud and frightening that I felt the back of my neck swell and my hair flowing out as if a wind were blowing it. I had an instant of complete disassociation and would have remained glued to the spot had it not been for don Juan, who with incredible speed and control turned my body around so my eyes could witness an inconceivable feat. Don Genaro was standing horizontally, about one hundred feet above the ground, on the trunk of a eucalyptus tree which was perhaps fifty yards away. That is, he was standing with his legs three feet apart, perpendicular to the tree. It was as if he had hooks on his shoes, and with them was capable of defying gravity. His arms were crossed over his chest and his back was turned to me.

I stared at him. I did not want to blink for fear of losing sight of him. I made a quick judgment and concluded that if I could maintain him within my field of vision I might detect a clue, a movement, a gesture, or anything that would help me understand what was taking place.

I felt don Juan's head next to my right ear and I heard him whisper that any attempt to explain was useless and idiotic. I heard him repeat, "Push your belly down, down."

It was a technique he had taught me, years before, to use in moments of great danger, fear, or stress. It consisted of pushing the diaphragm down while taking four sharp gasps of air through the mouth, followed by four deep inhalations and exhalations through the nose. He had explained that the gasps of air had to be felt as jolts in the middle part of the body, and that keeping the hands tightly clasped, covering the navel, gave strength to the midsection and helped to control the gasps and the deep inhalations, which had to be held for a count of eight as one pressed the diaphragm down. The exhalations were done twice through the nose and twice through the mouth in a slow or accelerated fashion, depending on one's preference.

I automatically obeyed don Juan. I did not dare, however, to take

my eyes away from don Genaro. As I kept on breathing, my body relaxed and I was aware that don Juan was twisting my legs. Apparently when he had turned me around my right foot had caught in a clump of dirt and my leg was uncomfortably bent. When he straightened me out I realized that the shock of seeing don Genaro standing on the trunk of a tree had made me oblivious to my discomfort.

Don Juan whispered in my ear that I should not stare at don Genaro. I heard him say, "Blink, blink."

For a moment I felt reluctant. Don Juan commanded me again. I was convinced that the whole affair was somehow linked to me as the onlooker, and if I, as the sole witness of don Genaro's deed, had stopped looking at him he would have fallen to the ground or perhaps the whole scene would have vanished.

After an excruciatingly long period of immobility, don Genaro swiveled on his heels, forty-five degrees to his right, and began to walk up the trunk. His body shivered. I saw him take one small step after another until he had taken eight. He even circumvented a branch. Then, with his arms still crossed over his chest, he sat down on the trunk with his back to me. His legs dangled as if he were sitting on a chair, as if gravity had no effect on him. He then sort of walked on his seat, downwards. He reached a branch that was parallel to his body and leaned on it with his left arm and his head for a few seconds; he seemed to be leaning more for dramatic effect than for support. He then kept on moving on his seat, inching his way from the trunk onto the branch, until he had changed his position and was sitting as one might normally sit on a branch.

Don Juan giggled. I had a horrible taste in my mouth. I wanted to turn round and face don Juan, who was slightly behind me to my right, but I did not dare miss any of don Genaro's actions.

He dangled his feet for a while, then crossed them and swung them gently, and finally he slipped upwards back onto the trunk.

Don Juan took my head gently in both hands and twisted my neck to the left until my line of vision was parallel to the tree rather than perpendicular to it. Looking at don Genaro from that angle, he did

not appear to be defying gravity. He was simply sitting on the trunk of a tree. I noticed then that if I stared and did not blink, the background became vague and diffuse, and the clarity of don Genaro's body became more intense; his shape became dominant, as if nothing else existed.

Don Genaro swiftly slid downward back onto the branch. He sat dangling his feet, like on a trapeze. Looking at him from a twisted perspective made both positions, especially sitting on the tree trunk, seem feasible.

Don Juan shifted my head to the right until it was resting on my shoulder. Don Genaro's position on the branch seemed perfectly normal, but when he moved onto the trunk again, I could not make the necessary perceptual adjustment and I saw him as if he were upside down, with his head towards the ground.

Don Genaro moved back and forth various times, and don Juan shifted my head from side to side every time don Genaro moved. The result of their manipulations was that I completely lost track of my normal perspective, and without it don Genaro's actions were not as awesome.

Don Genaro remained on the branch for a long time. Don Juan straightened my neck and whispered that don Genaro was about to descend. I heard him whisper in an imperative tone, "Press down, down."

I was in the middle of a fast exhalation when don Genaro's body seemed to be transfixed by some sort of tension; it glowed, became lax, swung backwards, and hung by the knees for a moment. His legs seemed to be so flaccid that they could not stay bent and he fell to the ground.

At the moment he began his downward fall, I also had the sensation of falling through endless space. My whole body experienced a painful and at the same time extremely pleasurable anguish; an anguish of such intensity and duration that my legs could no longer support the weight of my body and I fell down on the soft dirt. I could barely move my arms to buffer my fall. I was breathing so heavily that the soft dirt got into my nostrils and made them itch. I tried to get up; my muscles seemed to have lost their strength.

Don Juan and don Genaro came and stood over me. I heard their voices as if they were quite a distance from me, and yet I felt them pulling me. They must have lifted me up, each holding one of my arms and one of my legs, and carried me over a short distance. I was perfectly aware of the uncomfortable position of my neck and head, which hung limp. My eyes were open. I could see the ground and tufts of weeds passing under me. Finally, I had a cold seizure. Water entered into my mouth and nose and made me cough. My arms and legs moved frantically. I began to swim but the water was not deep enough and I found myself standing up in the shallow river where they had dumped me.

Don Juan and don Genaro laughed themselves silly. Don Juan rolled up his pants and came over closer to me; he looked me in the eye and said that I was not complete yet and pushed me gently back into the water. My body did not offer any resistance. I did not want to be dunked again but there was no way of connecting my volition to my muscles and I crumbled backwards. The coldness was even more intense. I quickly jumped up and scurried out on the opposite bank by mistake. Don Juan and don Genaro yelled and whistled and threw rocks into the bushes ahead of me, as though they were corralling a steer that was running astray. I crossed back over the river and sat on a rock next to them. Don Genaro handed me my clothes and then I noticed that I was naked, although I could not remember when or how I got my clothes off. I was dripping wet and did not want to put them on right away. Don Juan turned to don Genaro and in a booming tone said, "For heaven's sake, give the man a towel!" It took me a couple of seconds to realize the absurdity.

I felt very good. In fact, I was so happy that I did not want to talk. I had the certainty, however, that if I showed my euphoria they would have dumped me into the water again.

Don Genaro watched me. His eyes had the glint of a wild animal's. They pierced through me.

"Good for you," don Juan said to me all of a sudden. "You're contained now, but down by the eucalyptus trees you indulged like a son of a bitch."

I wanted to laugh hysterically. Don Juan's words seemed so ut-

terly funny that I had to make a supreme effort to contain myself. And then some part of me flashed a command. An uncontrollable itching in the midsection of my body made me take off my clothes and plunge back into the water. I stayed in the river for about five minutes. The coldness restored my sense of sobriety. When I got out I was myself again.

"Good show," don Juan said, tapping me on the shoulder.

They led me back to the eucalyptus trees. As we walked, don Juan explained that my "tonal" had been dangerously vulnerable, and that the incongruity of don Genaro's acts seemed to be too much for it. He said that they had decided not to tamper with it any more and go back to don Genaro's house, but the fact that I knew I had to plunge myself into the river again had changed everything. He did not say, however, what they intended to do.

We stood in the middle of the field, on the same spot we had been before. Don Juan was to my right and don Genaro to my left. They both stood with their muscles tensed, in a state of alertness. They maintained that tenseness for about ten minutes. I shifted my eyes from one to the other. I thought that don Juan would cue me on what to do. I was right. At one moment he relaxed his body and kicked some hard clumps of dirt. Without looking at me, he said, "I think we'd better go." I automatically reasoned that don Genaro must have had the intention of giving me another demonstration of the "nagual" but had decided not to. I felt relieved. I waited another moment for a final confirmation. Don Genaro also eased off and then both of them took one step forward. I knew then that we were through there. But at the very instant I loosened up, don Genaro again let out his incredible yell.

I began to breathe frantically. I looked around. Don Genaro had disappeared. Don Juan was standing in front of me. His body convulsed with laughter. He turned to me.

"I'm sorry," he said in a whisper. "There's no other way."

I wanted to ask about don Genaro, but I felt that if I did not keep on breathing and pressing down on my diaphragm I would die. Don Juan pointed with his chin to a place behind me. Without moving my feet, I began to turn my head over my left shoulder. But before I

could see what he was pointing at, don Juan jumped and stopped me. The force of his leap and the speed with which he grabbed me made me lose my balance. As I fell on my back I had the sensation that my startled reaction had been to grab on to don Juan and consequently I dragged him with me to the ground. But when I looked up, the impressions of my tactile and visual senses were in total disaccord. I saw don Juan standing over me laughing, while my body felt the unmistakable weight and pressure of another body on top of me, almost pinning me down.

Don Juan extended his hand and helped me get up. My bodily sensation was that he was lifting two bodies. He smiled knowingly and whispered that one should never turn to one's left when facing the "nagual." He said that the "nagual" was deadly and there was no need to make the risks more dangerous than they already were. He then gently turned me around and made me face an enormous eucalyptus tree. It was perhaps the oldest tree around. Its trunk was nearly twice as thick as any of the others. He pointed with his eyes to the top. Don Genaro was perched on a branch. He was facing me. I could see his eyes like two huge mirrors reflecting light. I did not want to look but don Juan insisted that I should not move my eyes away. In a very forceful whisper he ordered me to blink, and not to succumb to fright or indulgence.

I noticed that if I blinked steadily don Genaro's eyes were not so awesome. It was only when I stared that the glare of his eyes became maddening.

He squatted on the branch for a long time. Then, without moving his body at all, he jumped to the ground and landed, in the same squatting position, a couple of yards from where I was. I witnessed the complete sequence of his jump, and I knew that I had perceived more than my eyes had allowed me to catch. Don Genaro had not really jumped. Something had pushed him as if from behind and had made him glide on a parabolic course. The branch where he had been perched was possibly a hundred feet high, and the tree was located about a hundred and fifty feet away from me; thus, his body had to trace a parabola to land where it did. But the force needed to cover that distance was not the product of don Genaro's muscles; his

body was "blown" away from the branch to the ground. At one point I was able to see the soles of his shoes and his rear as his body described the parabola. Then he landed gently, although his weight crumbled the hard clumps of dried dirt and even raised a bit of dust.

Don Juan giggled behind me. Don Genaro stood up as if nothing had happened and tugged the sleeve of my shirt to give me a signal that we were leaving.

No one spoke on the way to don Genaro's house. I felt lucid and composed. A couple of times don Juan stopped and examined my eyes by staring into them. He seemed satisfied. As soon as we arrived, don Genaro went behind the house. It was still early in the morning. Don Juan sat on the floor by the door and pointed to a place for me to sit. I was exhausted. I lay down and went out like a light.

I woke up when don Juan shook me. I tried to look at the time. My watch was missing. Don Juan pulled it from his shirt pocket and handed it to me. It was around 1:00 P.M. I looked up and our eyes met.

"No. There's no explanation," he said, turning away from me. "The *nagual* is only for witnessing."

I went around the house looking for don Genaro; he was not there. I came back to the front. Don Juan had made me something to eat. After I had finished eating he began to talk.

"When one is dealing with the *nagual*, one should never look into it directly," he said. "You were peering at it this morning, and therefore you were sapped. The only way to look at the *nagual* is as if it were a common affair. One must blink in order to break the fixation. Our eyes are the eyes of the *tonal*, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that our eyes have been trained by the *tonal*, therefore the *tonal* claims them. One of the sources of your bafflement and discomfort is that your *tonal* doesn't let go of your eyes. The day it does, your *nagual* will have won a great battle. Your obsession or, better yet, everyone's obsession is to arrange the world according to the *tonal*'s rules; so every time we are confronted with the *nagual*, we go

out of our way to make our eyes stiff and intransigent. I must appeal to the part of your *tonal* which understands this dilemma and you must make an effort to free your eyes. The point is to convince the *tonal* that there are other worlds that can pass in front of the same windows. The *nagual* showed you that this morning. So, let your eyes be free; let them be true windows. The eyes can be the windows to peer into boredom or to peek into that infinity."

Don Juan made a sweeping arc with his left arm to point all around us. There was a glint in his eyes, and his smile was at once frightening and disarming.

"How can I do that?" I asked.

"I say that it is a very simple matter. Perhaps I say it is simple because I've been doing it for so long. All you have to do is to set up your intent as a customs house. Whenever you are in the world of the *tonal*, you should be an impeccable *tonal;* no time for irrational crap. But whenever you are in the world of the *nagual*, you should also be impeccable; no time for rational crap. For the warrior, intent is the gate in between. It closes completely behind him when he goes either way.

"Another thing one should do when facing the *nagual* is to shift the line of the eyes from time to time, in order to break the spell of the *nagual*. Changing the position of the eyes always eases the burden of the *tonal*. This morning I noticed that you were extremely vulnerable and I changed the position of your head. If you are in a pinch like that you should be able to shift by yourself. This shifting should be done only as a relief, though, not as another way of palisading yourself to safeguard the order of the *tonal*. My bet would be that you would strive to use this technique to hide the rationality of your *tonal* behind it, and thus believe that you're saving it from extinction. The flaw of your reasoning is that nobody wants or seeks the extinction of the *tonal*'s rationality. That fear is ill founded.

"There is nothing else I can tell you, except that you must follow every movement that Genaro makes, without draining yourself. You are testing now whether or not your *tonal* is crammed with nonessentials. If there are too many unnecessary items on your island you

won't be able to sustain the encounter with the *nagual*."

"What would happen to me?"

"You may die. No one is capable of surviving a deliberate encounter with the *nagual* without a long training. It takes years to prepare the *tonal* for such an encounter. Ordinarily, if an average man comes face to face with the *nagual* the shock would be so great that he would die. The goal of a warrior's training then is not to teach him to hex or to charm, but to prepare his *tonal* not to crap out. A most difficult accomplishment. A warrior must be taught to be impeccable and thoroughly empty before he could even conceive witnessing the *nagual*.

"In your case, for instance, you have to stop calculating. What you were doing this morning was absurd. You call it explaining. I call it a sterile and boring insistence of the *tonal* to have everything under its control. Whenever it doesn't succeed, there is a moment of bafflement and then the *tonal* opens itself to death. What a prick! It would rather kill itself than relinquish control. And yet there is very little we can do to change that condition."

"How did you change it yourself, don Juan?"

"The island of the *tonal* has to be swept clean and maintained clean. That's the only alternative that a warrior has. A clean island offers no resistance; it is as if there were nothing there."

He went around the house and sat down on a big smooth rock. From there one could look into a deep ravine. He signaled me to sit down next to him.

"Can you tell me, don Juan, what else we are going to do today?" I asked.

"We aren't going to do anything. That is, you and I will only be the witnesses. Your benefactor is Genaro."

I thought I had misunderstood him in my eagerness to take notes. At the beginning stages of my apprenticeship, don Juan himself had introduced the term "benefactor." My impression had always been that he himself was my benefactor.

Don Juan had stopped talking and was staring at me. I made a quick assessment and my conclusion was that he must have meant that don Genaro was something like the star performer on that oc-

casion. Don Juan giggled, as if he were reading my thoughts.

"Genaro is your benefactor," he repeated.

"But you are, aren't you?" I asked in a frantic tone.

"I'm the one who helped you sweep the island of the *tonal*," he said. "Genaro has two apprentices, Pablito and Nestor. He is helping them sweep the island; but I will show them the *nagual*. I will be their benefactor. Genaro is only their teacher. In these matters one can either talk or act; one cannot do both with the same person. One either takes the island of the *tonal* or one takes the *nagual*. In your case my duty has been to work with your *tonal*."

As don Juan spoke I had an attack of terror so intense that I was about to get ill. I had the feeling that he was going to leave me with don Genaro and that was a most dreadful scheme to me.

Don Juan laughed and laughed as I voiced my fears.

"The same thing happens to Pablito," he said. "The moment he sets eyes on me he gets ill. The other day he walked into the house when Genaro was gone. I was alone here and I had left my sombrero by the door. Pablito saw it and his *tonal* became so frightened that he actually shit in his pants."

I could easily understand and project into Pablito's feelings. When I considered the matter carefully, I had to admit that don Juan was terrifying. I had learned, however, to feel comfortable with him. I experienced with him a familiarity born out of our long association.

"I'm not going to leave you with Genaro," he said, still laughing. "I'm the one who takes care of your *tonal*. Without it you're dead."

"Has every apprentice a teacher and a benefactor?" I asked to ease my turmoil.

"No, not every apprentice. But some do."

"Why do some of them have both a teacher and a benefactor?"

"When an ordinary man is ready, power provides him with a teacher, and he becomes an apprentice. When the apprentice is ready, power provides him with a benefactor, and he becomes a sorcerer."

"What makes a man ready, so that power can provide him with a teacher?"

"No one knows that. We are only men. Some of us are men who

have learned to *see* and use the *nagual*, but nothing that we may have gained in the course of our lives can reveal to us the designs of power. Thus, not every apprentice has a benefactor. Power decides that."

I asked him if he himself had had a teacher and a benefactor, and for the first time in thirteen years he freely talked about them. He said that both his teacher and his benefactor were from central Mexico. I had always considered that information about don Juan to be of value for my anthropological research, but somehow at the moment of his revelation it did not matter.

Don Juan glanced at me. I though it was a look of concern. He then abruptly changed the subject and asked me to recount every detail of what I had experienced in the morning.

"A sudden fright always shrinks the *tonal*," he said as a comment on my description of how I felt when don Genaro screamed. "The problem here is not to let the *tonal* shrink itself out of the picture. A grave issue for a warrior is to know exactly when to allow his *tonal* to shrink and when to stop it. This is a great art. A warrior must struggle like a demon to shrink his *tonal*; and yet at the very moment the *tonal* shrinks, the warrior must reverse all that struggle to immediately halt that shrinking."

"But by doing that isn't he reverting back to what he already was?" I asked.

"No. After the *tonal* shrinks, the warrior is closing the gate from the other side. As long as his *tonal* is unchallenged and his eyes are tuned only for the *tonal*'s world, the warrior is on the safe side of the fence. He's on familiar ground and knows all the rules. But when his *tonal* shrinks, he is on the windy side, and that opening must be shut tight immediately, or he would be swept away. And this is not just a way of talking. Beyond the gate of the *tonal*'s eyes the wind rages. I mean a real wind. No metaphor. A wind that can blow one's life away. In fact, that is the wind that blows all living things on this earth. Years ago I acquainted you with that wind. You took it as a joke, though."

He was referring to a time when he had taken me to the mountains

and explained certain properties of the wind. I had never thought it was a joke, however.

"It's not important whether you took it seriously or not," he said after listening to my protests. "As a rule the *tonal* must defend itself, at any cost, every time it is threatened; so it is of no real consequence how the *tonal* reacts in order to accomplish its defense. The only important matter is that the *tonal* of a warrior must become acquainted with other alternatives. What a teacher aims for, in this case, is the total weight of those possibilities. It is the weight of those new possibilities which helps to shrink the *tonal*. By the same token, it is the same weight which helps stop the *tonal* from shrinking out of the picture."

He signaled me to proceed with my narrative of the events of the morning, and he interrupted me when I came to the part where don Genaro slid back and forth from the tree trunk to the branch.

"The *nagual* can perform extraordinary things," he said. "Things that do not seem possible, things that are unthinkable for the *tonal*. But the extraordinary thing is that the performer has no way of knowing how those things happen. In other words, Genaro doesn't know how he does those things; he only knows that he does them. The secret of a sorcerer is that he knows how to get to the *nagual*, but once he gets there, your guess is as good as his as to what takes place."

"But what does one feel while doing those things?"

"One feels like one is doing something."

"Would don Genaro feel like he's walking up the trunk of a tree?"

Don Juan looked at me for a moment, then he turned his head away.

"No," he said in a forceful whisper. "Not in the way you mean it."

He did not say anything else. I was practically holding my breath, waiting for his explanation. Finally I had to ask, "But what does he feel?"

"I can't say, not because it is a personal matter, but because there is no way of describing it."

"Come on," I coaxed him. "There is nothing that one can't explain

or elucidate with words. I believe that even if it's not possible to describe something directly, one can allude to it, beat around the bush."

Don Juan laughed. His laughter was friendly and kind. And yet there was a touch of mockery and sheer mischievousness in it.

"I have to change the subject," he said. "Suffice it to say that the *nagual* was aimed at you this morning. Whatever Genaro did was a mixture of you and him. His *nagual* was tempered by your *tonal*."

I insisted on probing and asked him, "When you're showing the *nagual* to Pablito, what do you feel?"

"I can't explain that," he said in a soft voice. "And not because I don't want to, but simply because I can't. My *tonal* stops there."

I did not want to press him any further. We remained silent for a while, then he began to talk again

"Let's say that a warrior learns to tune his *will*, to direct it to a pinpoint, to focus it wherever he wants. It is as if his *will*, which comes from the midsection of his body, is one single luminous fiber, a fiber that he can direct at any conceivable place. That fiber is the road to the *nagual*. Or I could also say that the warrior sinks into the *nagual* through that single fiber.

"Once he has sunk, the expression of the *nagual* is a matter of his personal temperament. If the warrior is funny the *nagual* is funny. If the warrior is morbid the *nagual* is morbid. If the warrior is mean the *nagual* is mean.

"Genaro always cracks me up because he's one of the most delightful creatures alive. I never know what he's going to come up with. That to me is the ultimate essence of sorcery. Genaro is such a fluid warrior that the slightest focusing of his *will* makes his *nagual* act in incredible ways."

"Did you yourself observe what don Genaro was doing in the trees?" I asked.

"No, I just knew, because I *saw*, that the *nagual* was in the trees. The rest of the show was for you alone."

"Do you mean, don Juan, that, like the time when you pushed me and I ended up in the market, you were not with me?"

"It was something like that. When one meets the *nagual* face to face, one always has to be alone. I was around only to protect your *tonal*. That is my charge."

Don Juan said that my "tonal" was nearly blasted to pieces when don Genaro descended from the tree; not so much because of any inherent quality of danger in the "nagual," but because my "tonal" indulged in its bewilderment. He said that one of the aims of the warrior's training was to cut the bewilderment of the "tonal," until the warrior was so fluid that he could admit everything without admitting anything.

When I described don Genaro's leap up to the tree and his leap down from it, don Juan said that the yell of a warrior was one of the most important issues of sorcery, and that don Genaro was capable of focusing on his yell, using it as a vehicle.

"You are right," he said. "Genaro was pulled partly by his yell and partly by the tree. That was true *seeing* on your part. That was a true picture of the *nagual*. Genaro's *will* was focused on the yell and his personal touch made the tree pull the *nagual*. The lines went both ways from Genaro to the tree and from the tree to Genaro.

"What you should have *seen* when Genaro jumped from the tree was that he was focusing on a spot in front of you and then the tree pushed him. But it only seemed to be a push; in essence it was more like being released by the tree. The tree released the *nagual* and the *nagual* came back to the world of the *tonal* on the spot he focused on.

"The second time that Genaro came down from the tree your *tonal* was not so bewildered; you were not indulging so hard and therefore you were not as sapped as you were the first time."

Around four in the afternoon don Juan stopped our conversation.

"We are going back to the eucalyptus trees," he said. "The *nagual* is waiting for us there."

"Aren't we risking being seen by people?" I asked.

"No. The *nagual* will keep everything suspended," he said.

THE WHISPERING OF THE NAGUAL

As we approached the eucalyptuses I saw don Genaro sitting on a tree stump. He waved his hand, smiling. We joined him.

There was a flock of crows in the trees. They were cawing as if something were frightening them. Don Genaro said that we had to remain motionless and quiet until the crows had calmed down.

Don Juan leaned his back against a tree and signaled me to do the same on a tree next to him a few feet away to his left. We were both facing don Genaro, who was three or four yards in front of us.

With a subtle movement of his eyes, don Juan gave me a cue to rearrange my feet. He was standing firmly, with his feet slightly apart, touching the tree trunk only with the upper part of his shoulder blades and with the very back of his head. His arms hung at his sides.

We stood like that for perhaps an hour. I kept a close vigil on both of them, especially on don Juan. At a given moment he slid gently down the tree trunk and sat down, still keeping the same areas of his body in contact with the tree. His knees were raised and he rested his arms on them. I imitated his movements. My legs had become extremely tired and the change of position made me feel quite comfortable.

The crows had stopped cawing by degrees, until there was not a single sound in the field. The silence was more unnerving to me than the noise of the crows.

Don Juan spoke to me in a quiet tone. He said that the twilight was my best hour. He looked at the sky. It must have been after six.

It had been an overcast day and I had had no way of checking the position of the sun. I heard the distant cries of geese and perhaps turkeys. But in the field with eucalyptus trees there was no noise. There had been no whistling of birds or sounds of large insects for a long time.

The bodies of don Juan and don Genaro had been in perfect immobility, as far as I could judge, except for a few seconds when they shifted their weight in order to rest.

After don Juan and I had slid to the ground, don Genaro made a sudden motion. He lifted his feet up and squatted on the stump. He then turned forty-five degrees, and I was looking at his left profile. I stared at don Juan in search of a clue. He jutted his chin; it was a command to look at don Genaro.

A monstrous agitation began to overtake me. I was incapable of containing myself. My bowels were loose. I could absolutely feel what Pablito must have felt when he saw don Juan's sombrero. I experienced such intestinal distress that I had to get up and run to the bushes. I heard them howling with laughter.

I did not dare to return to where they were. I hesitated for a while; I figured that the spell must have been broken by my sudden outburst. I did not have to ponder for too long; don Juan and don Genaro came over to where I was. They flanked me and we walked to another field. We stopped at the very center of it and I recognized that we had been there in the morning.

Don Juan spoke to me. He told me that I had to be fluid and silent and should stop my internal dialogue. I listened attentively. Don Genaro must have been aware that all my concentration was focused on don Juan's admonitions and he used that moment to do what he had done in the morning; he again let out his maddening scream. He caught me unaware but not unprepared. I almost immediately recuperated my balance by breathing. The jolt was terrifying, yet it did not have a prolonged effect on me and I was capable of following don Genaro's movements with my eyes. I saw him leap to a low branch on a tree. As I followed his course for a distance of eighty to ninety feet, my eyes experienced an extravagant distortion. It was not that

he leaped by means of the spring action of his muscles; he rather glided through the air, catapulted in part by his formidable yell, and pulled by some vague lines emanating from the tree. It was as if the tree had sipped him through its lines.

Don Genaro stayed perched on the low branch for a moment. His left profile was turned to me. He began to perform a series of strange movements. His head wobbled, his body shivered. He hid his head various times in between his knees. The more he moved and fretted the more difficult it was for me to focus my eyes on his body. He seemed to be dissolving. I blinked desperately and then I shifted my line of vision by twisting my head to the right and to the left as don Juan had taught me. From my left perspective I saw don Genaro's body as I had never seen it before. It was as if he had put on a disguise. He had a furry suit on; the hair was the color of a Siamese cat, light buff-brown, with touches of dark chocolate brown on the legs and the back; it had a long thick tail. Don Genaro's costume made him look like a furry brown long-legged crocodile sitting on a branch. I could not see his head or his features.

I straightened my head to a normal position. The vision of don Genaro in disguise remained unchanged.

Don Genaro's arms shivered. He stood up on the branch, sort of stooped over, and leaped towards the ground. The branch was perhaps fifteen to twenty feet high. As far as I could judge, it was an ordinary leap of a man wearing a costume. I saw don Genaro's body almost touching the ground and then the thick tail of his costume vibrated and instead of landing he took off, as if powered with a silent jet engine. He went over the trees and then glided almost to the ground. He did that over and over. At times he would hold on to a branch and swing around a tree, or curl like an eel between branches. And then he would glide and circle around us, or flap his arms as he touched the very tops of the trees with his stomach.

Don Genaro's cavorting filled me with awe. My eyes followed him and two or three times I clearly perceived that he was using some brilliant lines, as if they were pulleys, to glide from one place to another. Then he went over the tops of the trees towards the south and disappeared behind them. I tried to anticipate the place where

he would appear again, but he did not show up at all.

I noticed then that I was lying on my back and yet I had not been aware of a change in perspective. I had thought all along that I was looking at don Genaro from a standing position.

Don Juan helped me to sit up and then I saw don Genaro walking towards us with a nonchalant air. He smiled coyly and asked me if I had liked his flying. I attempted to say something but I was speechless.

Don Genaro exchanged a strange look with don Juan and adopted a squat position again. He leaned over and whispered something in my left ear. I heard him say, "Why don't you come and fly with me?" He repeated it five or six times.

Don Juan came towards me and whispered in my right ear, "Don't talk. Just follow Genaro."

Don Genaro made me squat and whispered to me again. I heard him with crystal clear precision. He repeated the statement perhaps ten times. He said, "Trust the *nagual*. The *nagual* will take you."

Then don Juan whispered in my right ear another statement. He said, "Change your feelings."

I could hear both of them talking to me at once, but I could also hear them individually. Every one of don Genaro's statements had to do with the general context of gliding through the air. The statements that he repeated dozens of times seemed to be those that became engraved in my memory. Don Juan's words, on the other hand, had to do with specific commands, which he repeated countless times. The effect of that dual whispering was most extraordinary. It was as if the sound of their individual words were splitting me in half. Finally the abyss between my two ears was so wide that I lost all sense of unity. There was something that was undoubtedly me, but it was not solid. It was rather like a glowing fog, a dark yellow mist that had feelings.

Don Juan told me that he was going to mold me for flying. The sensation I had then was that the words were like pliers that twisted and molded my "feelings."

Don Genaro's words were an invitation to follow him. I felt I wanted to, but I could not. The split was so great that I was incapaci-

tated. Then I heard the same short statements repeated endlessly by both of them; things like "Look at that magnificent flying shape." "Leap, leap." "Your legs will reach the treetops." "The eucalyptuses are like green dots." "The worms are lights."

Something in me must have ceased at a given moment; perhaps my awareness of being talked to. I sensed that don Genaro was still with me, yet from the point of view of my perception I could only distinguish an enormous mass of the most extraordinary lights. At times their glare diminished and at times the lights became intense. I was also experiencing movement. The effect was like being pulled by a vacuum that never let me stop. Whenever my motion seemed to diminish and I could actually focus my awareness on the lights, the vacuum would pull me away again.

At one moment, between being pulled back and forth, I experienced the ultimate confusion. The world around me, whatever it was, was coming and going at the same time, thus the vacuumlike effect. I could see two separate worlds; one that was going away from me and the other that was coming closer to me. I did not realize this as one ordinarily would; that is, I did not become aware of it as something that had thus far been unrevealed. I rather had two realizations without the unifying conclusion.

After that my perceptions became dull. They either lacked precision, or they were too many and I had no way of sorting them. The next batch of discernible apperceptions were a series of sounds that happened at the end of a long tubelike formation. The tube was myself and the sounds were don Juan and don Genaro, again talking to me through each of my ears. The more they talked the shorter the tube became until the sounds were in a range I recognized. That is to say, the sounds of don Juan and don Genaro's words reached my normal range of perception; the sounds were first recognizable as noises, then as words yelled, and finally as words whispered in my ears.

I next noticed things of the familiar world. I was apparently lying face down. I could distinguish clumps of dirt, small rocks, dried leaves. And then I became aware of the field of eucalyptus trees.

Don Juan and don Genaro were standing by me. It was still light. I

felt that I had to get into the water in order to consolidate myself. I walked to the river, took off my clothes and stayed in the cold water long enough to restore my perceptual balance.

Don Genaro left as soon as we arrived at his house. He casually patted me on the shoulder as he was leaving. I jumped away in a reflex reaction. I thought that his touch was going to be painful; to my amazement it was simply a gentle pat on the shoulder.

Don Juan and don Genaro laughed like two kids celebrating a prank.

"Don't be so jumpy," don Genaro said. "The *nagual* is not after you all the time."

He smacked his lips as though disapproving my overreaction, and with an air of candor and comradeship he extended his arms. I embraced him. He patted my back in a most friendly warm gesture.

"You must be concerned with the *nagual* only at certain moments," he said. "The rest of the time you and I are like all the other people on this earth."

He faced don Juan and smiled at him.

"Isn't it so, Juancho?" he asked, emphasizing the word Juancho, a funny nickname for Juan.

"That's so, Gerancho," don Juan answered, making up the word Gerancho.

They both had an explosion of laughter.

"I must warn you," don Juan said to me, "you have to exert the most demanding vigil to be sure when a man is a *nagual* and when a man is simply a man. You may die if you come into direct physical contact with the *nagual*."

Don Juan turned to don Genaro and with a beaming smile asked, "Isn't it so, Gerancho?"

"That's so, absolutely so, Juancho," don Genaro replied, and both of them laughed.

Their childlike mirth was very moving to me. The events of the day had been exhausting and I was very emotional. A wave of self-pity engulfed me. I was about to weep as I kept on repeating to myself that whatever they had done to me was irreversible and most

likely injurious. Don Juan seemed to be reading my thoughts and shook his head in a gesture of disbelief. He chuckled. I made an effort to stop my internal dialogue, and my self-pity vanished.

"Genaro is very warm," don Juan commented when don Genaro had left. "The design of power was that you found a gentle benefactor."

I did not know what to say. The idea that don Genaro was my benefactor intrigued me no end. I wanted don Juan to tell me more about it. He did not seem inclined to talk. He looked at the sky and at the top of the dark silhouette of some trees at the side of the house. He sat down with his back against a thick forked pole, planted almost in front of the door, and told me to sit next to him to his left.

I sat by him. He pulled me closer by the arm until I was touching him. He said that that time of the night was dangerous for me, especially on that occasion. In a very calm voice he gave me a set of instructions: We were not to move from the spot until he saw fit to do so; we were to keep on talking, on an even keel, without long interruptions; and I had to breathe and blink as if I were facing the "nagual."

"Is the *nagual* around here?" I asked.

"Of course," he said and chuckled.

I practically huddled against don Juan. He began to talk and actually solicited any kind of question from me. He even handed me my notebook and pencil as if I could write in the darkness. His contention was that I needed to be as calm and normal as possible and there could be no better way of fortifying my "tonal" than through taking notes. He put the whole matter on a very compelling level; he said that if taking notes was my predilection, then I should be able to do it in complete darkness. There was a tone of challenge in his voice when he said that I could turn the taking of notes into a warrior's task, in which case the darkness would be no obstacle.

Somehow, he must have convinced me, for I managed to scribble down parts of our conversation. The main topic was don Genaro as my benefactor. I was curious to know when don Genaro had become my benefactor, and don Juan coaxed me to remember a supposedly

extraordinary event that had happened the day I had met don Genaro, and which served as a proper omen. I could not recollect anything of the sort. I began to recount the experience; as far as I could remember it was a most unobtrusive and casual meeting, which took place in the spring of 1968. Don Juan stopped me.

"If you're dumb enough not to remember," he said, "we'd better leave it that way. A warrior follows the dictums of power. You will remember it when it becomes necessary."

Don Juan said that having a benefactor was a most difficult matter. He used as an example the case of his own apprentice Eligio, who had been with him for many years. He said that Eligio had been unable to find a benefactor. I asked him if Eligio would eventually find one; he answered that there was no way of predicting the quirks of power. He reminded me that once, years before, we had found a group of young Indians roaming around the desert in northern Mexico. He said that he "saw" that none of them had a benefactor, and that the general surroundings and the mood of the moment were just right for him to give them a hand, by showing them the "nagual." He was talking about one night when four young men sat by a fire while don Juan put on what I thought to be a spectacular show in which he apparently appeared to each of us in a different guise.

"Those guys knew a great deal," he said. "You were the only greenhorn among them."

"What happened to them afterwards?" I asked.

"Some of them found a benefactor," he replied.

Don Juan said that it was the duty of a benefactor to deliver his ward to power, and that the benefactor imparted to the neophyte his personal touch, as much if not more so than the teacher.

During a short pause in our talk I heard a strange rasping noise at the back of the house. Don Juan held me down; I had almost stood up as a reaction to it. Before the noise happened, our conversation had been a matter of course for me. But when the pause occurred, and there was a moment of silence, the strange noise popped through it. At that instant I had the certainty that our conversation was an extraordinary event. I had the sensation that the sound of don Juan's

words and mine were like a sheet that broke, and that the rasping sound had been deliberately prowling, waiting for a chance to break through.

Don Juan commanded me to sit tight and not to pay attention to the surroundings. The rasping noise reminded me of the sound of a gopher clawing on hard dry ground. The moment I had thought of the simile I also had a visual image of a rodent, like the one don Juan had showed me on his palm. It was as if I were falling asleep and my thoughts were turning into visions or dreams.

I began the breathing exercise and held my stomach with my clasped hands. Don Juan kept on talking, but I was not listening to him. My attention was on the soft rustle of a snake-like thing slithering over small dry leaves. I had a moment of panic and physical revulsion at the thought of a snake crawling on me. I involuntarily put my feet under don Juan's legs and breathed and blinked frantically.

I heard the noise so close that it seemed to be only a couple of feet away. My panic mounted. Don Juan calmly said that the only way to fend off the "nagual" was to remain unaltered. He ordered me to stretch my legs and not to focus my attention on the noise. He imperatively demanded that I write or ask questions and make an effort not to succumb.

After a great struggle I asked him if don Genaro was making the noise. He said that it was the "nagual" and that I should not mix them; Genaro was the name of the "tonal." He then said something else, but I could not understand him. Something was circling around the house and I could not concentrate on our conversation. He commanded me to make a supreme effort. At one moment I found that I was babbling idiocies about my being unworthy. I had a jolt of fear and snapped into a state of great lucidity. Don Juan told me then that it was all right to listen. But there were no sounds.

"*The nagual* is gone," don Juan said and stood up and went inside.

He lit don Genaro's kerosene lantern and made some food. We ate in silence. I asked him if the "nagual" was coming back.

"No," he said with a serious expression. "It was just testing you. At this time of night, just after the twilight, you should always in-

volve yourself in something. Anything would do. It is only for a short period, an hour perhaps, but in your case a most deadly hour.

"Tonight the *nagual* tried to make you stumble, but you were strong enough to ward off its assault. Once, you succumbed to it and I had to pour water over your body, this time you did fine."

I remarked that the word "assault" made the event sound very dangerous.

"Made it sound dangerous? That's a weird way of putting it," he said. "I'm not trying to scare you. The actions of the *nagual* are deadly. I've already told you that, and it is not that Genaro tries to hurt you; on the contrary, his concern for you is impeccable, but if you don't have enough power to parry the *nagual*'s onslaught, you're dead, regardless of my help or Genaro's concern."

After we finished eating, don Juan sat next to me and looked over my shoulder at my notes. I commented that it would probably take me years to assort everything that had happened to me during that day. I knew that I had been flooded with perceptions I could not ever hope to understand.

"If you cannot understand, you're in great shape," he said. "It is when you understand that you're in a mess. That's from the point of view of a sorcerer, of course. From the point of view of an average man, if you fail to understand you're sinking. In your case, I would say that an average man would think that you are disassociated, or you're beginning to become disassociated."

I laughed at his choice of words. I knew that he was throwing the concept of disassociation back at me; I had mentioned it to him some time back in connection with my fears. I assured him that this time I was not going to ask anything about what I had been through.

"I've never put a ban on talking," he said. "We can talk about the *nagual* to your heart's content, as long as you don't try to explain it. If you remember correctly, I said that the *nagual* is only for witnessing. So, we can talk about what we witnessed and about how we witnessed it. You want to take on the explanation of how it is all possible, though, and that is an abomination. You want to explain the *nagual* with the *tonal*. That is stupid, especially in your case, since you can no longer hide behind your ignorance. You know very well

that we make sense in talking only because we stay within certain boundaries, and those boundaries are not applicable to the *nagual*."

I attempted to clarify the issue. It was not only that I wanted to explain everything from a rational point of view, but my need to explain stemmed from my necessity to maintain order throughout the tremendous onslaughts of chaotic stimuli and perceptions I had had.

Don Juan's comment was that I was trying to defend a point I did not agree with.

"You know damn well that you're indulging," he said. "To maintain order means to be a perfect *tonal*, and to be a perfect *tonal* means to be aware of everything that takes place on the island of the *tonal*. But you're not. So your argument about maintaining order has no truth in it. You only use it to win an argument."

I did not know what to say. Don Juan sort of consoled me by saying that it took a gigantic struggle to clean the island of the "tonal." Then he asked me to recount all I had perceived in my second session with the "nagual." When I had finished, he said that what I had witnessed as a furry crocodile was the epitome of don Genaro's sense of humor.

"It's a pity that you're still so heavy," he said. "You always get hooked by bewilderment and miss Genaro's real art."

"Were you aware of his appearance, don Juan?"

"No. The show was only for you."

"What did you *see?*"

"Today all I could *see* was the movement of the *nagual*, gliding through the trees and whirling around us. Anyone who *sees* can witness that."

"What about someone who doesn't *see?*"

"He would witness nothing, just the trees being blown by a wild wind perhaps. We interpret any unknown expression of the *nagual* as something we know; in this case the *nagual* might be interpreted as a breeze shaking the leaves, or even as some strange light, perhaps a lightning bug of unusual size. If a man who doesn't *see* is pressed, he would say that he thought he saw something but could not remember what. This is only natural. The man would be talking sense. After

all, his eyes would have judged nothing extraordinary; being the eyes of the *tonal* they have to be limited to the *tonal*'s world, and in that world there is nothing staggeringly new, nothing which the eyes cannot apprehend and the *tonal* cannot explain."

I asked him about the uncharted perceptions that resulted from their whispering in my ears.

"That was the best part of the whole event," he said. "The rest could be dispensed with, but that was the crown of the day. The rule calls for the benefactor and the teacher to make that final trimming. The most difficult of all acts. Both the teacher and the benefactor must be impeccable warriors to even attempt the feat of splitting a man. You don't know this, because it still is beyond your realm, but power had been lenient with you again. Genaro is the most impeccable warrior there is."

"Why is the splitting of a man a great feat?"

"Because it is dangerous. You may have died like a little bug. Or worse yet, we may have never been able to put you back together, and you would have remained on that plateau of feeling."

"Why was it necessary to do it to me, don Juan?"

"There is a certain time when the *nagual* has to whisper in the ear of the apprentice and split him."

"What does that mean, don Juan?"

"In order to be an average *tonal* a man must have unity. His whole being must belong to the island of the *tonal*. Without that unity the man would go berserk; a sorcerer, however, has to break that unity, but without endangering his being. A sorcerer's goal is to last; that is, he doesn't take unnecessary risks, therefore he spends years sweeping his island until a moment when he could, in a manner of speaking, sneak off it. Splitting a man in two is the gate for such an escape.

"The splitting, which is the most dangerous thing you've ever gone through, was smooth and simple. The *nagual* was masterful in guiding you. Believe me, only an impeccable warrior can do that. I felt very good for you."

Don Juan put his hand on my shoulder and I had a gigantic urge to weep.

"Am I arriving at a point when you won't see me any more?" I asked.

He laughed and shook his head.

"You indulge like a son of a bitch," he said. "We all do that, though. We have different ways, that's all. Sometimes I indulge too. My way is to feel that I have pampered you and made you weak. I know that Genaro has the same feeling about Pablito. He pampers him like a child. But that is the way power set it up to be. Genaro gives Pablito everything he's capable of giving and one cannot wish he would do something else. One cannot criticize a warrior for doing his impeccable best."

He was quiet for a moment. I was too nervous to sit in silence.

"What do you think was happening to me when I felt like I was being sucked by a vacuum?" I asked.

"You were gliding," he said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Through the air?"

"No. For the *nagual* there is no land, or air, or water. At this point you yourself can agree with that. Twice you were in that limbo and you were only at the door of the *nagual*. You've told me that everything you encountered was uncharted. So the *nagual* glides, or flies, or does whatever it may do, in *nagual*'s time, and that has nothing to do with *tonal*'s time. The two things don't jibe."

As don Juan spoke I felt a tremor in my body. My jaw dropped and my mouth opened involuntarily. My ears unplugged and I could hear a barely perceptible tingle or vibration. While I was describing my sensations to don Juan I noticed that when I talked it sounded as if someone else were talking. It was a complex sensation that amounted to my hearing what I was going to say before I said it.

My left ear was a source of extraordinary sensations. I felt that it was more powerful and more accurate than my right ear. There was something in it that had not been there before. When I turned around to face don Juan, who was to my right, I became aware that I had a range of clear auditory perception around that ear. It was a physical space, a range within which I could hear everything with incredible fidelity. By turning my head around I could scan the surroundings with my ear.

"The whispering of the *nagual* did that to you," don Juan said when I described my sensorial experience. "It'll come at times and then vanish. Don't be afraid of it, or of any unusual sensation that you may have from now on. But above all, don't indulge and become obsessed with those sensations. I know you will succeed. The time for your splitting was right. Power fixed all that. Now everything depends on you. If you are powerful enough you will sustain the great shock of being split. But if you're incapable of holding on, you will perish. You will begin to wither away, lose weight, become pale, absent-minded, irritable, quiet."

"Perhaps if you would have told me years ago," I said, "what you and don Genaro were doing, I would have enough . . ."

He raised his hand and did not let me finish.

"That's a meaningless statement," he said. "You once told me that if it wouldn't be for the fact that you're stubborn and given to rational explanations you would be a sorcerer by now. But to be a sorcerer in your case means that you have to overcome stubbornness and the need for rational explanations, which stand in your way. What's more, those shortcomings are your road to power. You can't say that power would flow to you if your life would be different.

"Genaro and I have to act the same way you do, within certain limits. Power sets up those limits and a warrior is, let's say, a prisoner of power; a prisoner who has one free choice: the choice to act either like an impeccable warrior, or to act like an ass. In the final analysis, perhaps the warrior is not a prisoner but a slave of power, because that choice is no longer a choice for him. Genaro cannot act in any other way but impeccably. To act like an ass would drain him and cause his demise.

"The reason why you're afraid of Genaro is because he has to use the avenue of fright to shrink your *tonal*. Your body knows that, although your *reason* may not, and thus your body wants to run away every time Genaro is around."

I mentioned that I was curious to know if don Genaro deliberately set out to scare me. He said that the "nagual" did strange things, things which were not foreseeable. He gave me, as an example, what had happened between us in the morning when he prevented my

turning to my left to look at don Genaro in the tree. He said that he was aware of what his "nagual" had done although he had no way of knowing about it ahead of time. His explanation of the whole affair was that my sudden movement to the left was a step towards my death, which my "tonal" was deliberately taking as a suicidal plunge. That movement stirred his "nagual" and the result was that some part of him fell on top of me.

I made an involuntary gesture of perplexity.

"Your *reason* is telling you again that you're immortal," he said.

"What do you mean by that, don Juan?"

"An immortal being has all the time in the world for doubts and bewilderment and fears. A warrior, on the other hand, cannot cling to the meanings made under the *tonal*'s order, because he knows for a fact that the totality of himself has but a little time on this earth."

I wanted to make a serious point. My fears and doubts and bewilderment were not on a conscious level, and, no matter how hard I tried to control them, every time I was confronted with don Juan and don Genaro I felt helpless.

"A warrior cannot be helpless," he said. "Or bewildered or frightened, not under any circumstances. For a warrior there is time only for his impeccability; everything else drains his power, impeccability replenishes it."

"We're back again to my old question, don Juan. What's impeccability?"

"Yes, we're back again to your old question and consequently we're back again to my old answer: 'Impeccability is to do your best in whatever you're engaged in.'"

"But don Juan, my point is that I'm always under the impression I'm doing my best, and obviously I'm not."

"It's not as complicated as you make it appear. The key to all these matters of impeccability is the sense of having or not having time. As a rule of thumb, when you feel and act like an immortal being that has all the time in the world you are not impeccable; at those times you should turn, look around, and then you will realize that your feeling of having time is an idiocy. There are no survivors on this earth!"

THE WINGS OF PERCEPTION

Don Juan and I spent the whole day in the mountains. We left at dawn. He took me to four places of power and at each one of them he gave me specific instructions on how to proceed towards the fulfillment of the particular task that he had outlined years before as a life situation for me. We returned in the late afternoon. After eating, don Juan left don Genaro's house. He told me that I had to wait for Pablito, who was bringing some kerosene for the lantern, and that I should talk to him.

I became utterly absorbed in working on my notes and did not hear Pablito come in until he was next to me. Pablito's comment was that he had been practicing the "gait of power," and because of that I could not possibly have heard him unless I was capable of "seeing."

I had always liked Pablito. I had not, however, had very many opportunities in the past to be alone with him, although we were good friends. Pablito had always struck me as being a most charming person. His name, of course, was Pablo, but the diminutive, Pablito, suited him better. He was small-boned but wiry. Like don Genaro he was lean, unsuspectedly muscular, and strong. He was perhaps in his late twenties, but it seemed like he was eighteen. He was dark and of medium height. His brown eyes were clear and bright, and like don Genaro he had a winning smile with a touch of devilishness in it.

I asked him about his friend Nestor, don Genaro's other apprentice. In the past I had always seen them together, and they had

always given me the impression of having an excellent rapport with each other; yet they were opposites in physical appearance and character. While Pablito was jovial and frank, Nestor was gloomy and withdrawn. He was also taller, heavier, darker, and much older.

Pablito said that Nestor had finally become involved in his work with don Genaro, and that he had changed into an altogether different person since the last time I had seen him. He did not want to elaborate any further on Nestor's work or change of personality and abruptly shifted the topic of conversation.

"I understand the *nagual* is biting your heels," he said.

I was surprised that he knew and I asked how he had found that out.

"Genaro tells me everything," he said.

I noticed that he did not speak of don Genaro in the same formal way I did. He simply called him Genaro in a familiar fashion. He said that don Genaro was like his brother, and that they were at ease around each other as though they were family. He openly professed that he loved don Genaro dearly. I was deeply moved by his simplicity and candor. In talking to him, I realized how close in temperament don Juan and I were; thus our relationship was formal and strict in comparison to don Genaro and Pablito's.

I asked Pablito why he was afraid of don Juan. His eyes flickered. It was as if the mere thought of don Juan made him wince. He did not answer. He seemed to be assessing me in some mysterious way.

"You're not afraid of him?" he asked.

I told him I was afraid of don Genaro and he laughed as if that were the last thing he expected to hear. He said that the difference between don Juan and don Genaro was like the difference between day and night. Don Genaro was the day; don Juan was the night, and as such he was the most frightening being on earth. Describing his fear for don Juan led Pablito to make some comments about his own condition as an apprentice.

"I'm in a most miserable state," he said. "If you could see what's in my house you would realize that I know too much for an ordinary man, and yet if you saw me with the *nagual*, you would realize that I don't know enough."

He quickly changed the subject and began to laugh at my taking notes. He said that don Genaro had provided hours of fun imitating me. He added that don Genaro liked me very much, in spite of the oddities of my person, and that he had expressed his delight in my being his "protegido."

This was the first time I had heard that term. It was congruous with another term introduced by don Juan at the beginning of our association. He had told me that I was his "escogido," the chosen one. The word "protegido" meant the protected one.

I asked Pablito about his meetings with the "nagual" and he told me the story of his first encounter with it. He said that once don Juan gave him a basket, which he took to be a gift of good will. He placed it on a hook over the door of his room, and since he could not conceive any use for it at that moment he forgot about it all day. He said that his idea was that the basket was a gift of power and had to be put to use with something very special.

During the early evening, which Pablito said was his deadly hour also, he walked into his room to get his jacket. He was alone in the house and was getting ready to go visit a friend. The room was dark. He grabbed the jacket and when he was about to reach the door the basket fell in front of him and rolled near his feet. Pablito said that he laughed his fright away as soon as he saw that it had only been the basket that had fallen from the hook. He leaned over to pick it up and got the jolt of his life. The basket jumped out of his reach and began to shake and squeak, as if someone were twisting and pressing down on it. Pablito said that there was enough light coming from the kitchen to clearly distinguish everything in the room. He stared at the basket for a moment, although he felt he should not do that. The basket began to convulse in the midst of some heavy, rasping and difficult breathing. Pablito maintained, in recounting his experience, that he actually saw and heard the basket breathing, and that it was alive and chased him around the room, blocking his exit. He said that the basket then began to swell, all the strips of bamboo came loose and turned into a giant ball, like a dry tumbleweed that rolled towards him. He fell backwards on the floor and the ball began to crawl onto his feet. Pablito said that by that time he was out of his

mind, screaming hysterically. The ball had him trapped and moved on his legs like pins going through him. He tried to push it away and then noticed that the ball was the face of don Juan with his mouth open ready to devour him. At that point he could not stand the terror and lost consciousness.

Pablito, in a very frank and open manner, told me a series of terrifying encounters that he and other members of his household had had with the "nagual." We spent hours talking. He seemed to be in very much the same quandary that I was in, but was definitely more sensitive than I in handling himself within the sorcerers' frame of reference.

At one moment he got up and said that he felt don Juan was coming and did not want to be found there. He took off with incredible speed. It was as if something had pulled him out of the room. He left me in the middle of saying good-by.

Don Juan and don Genaro came back shortly. They were laughing.

"Pablito was running down the road like a soul chased by the devil," don Juan said. "I wonder why?"

"I think he got frightened when he saw Carlitos working his fingers to the bone," don Genaro said, mocking my writing.

He came closer to me.

"Hey! I've got an idea," he said almost in a whisper. "Since you like to write so much, why don't you learn to write with your finger instead of a pencil. That'll be a blast."

Don Juan and don Genaro sat by my side and laughed while they speculated about the possibility of writing with one's finger. Don Juan, in a serious tone, made a strange comment. He said, "There is no doubt that he could write with his finger, but would he be able to read it?"

Don Genaro doubled up with laughter and added, "I am confident that he can read anything." And then he began to tell a most disconcerting tale about a country bumpkin who became an important official during a time of political upheaval. Don Genaro said that the hero of his story was appointed minister, or governor, or perhaps

even president, because there was no way of telling what people would do in their folly. Because of this appointment he came to believe that he was indeed important and learned to put on an act.

Don Genaro paused and examined me with the air of a ham actor overplaying his part. He winked at me and moved his eyebrows up and down. He said that the hero of the story was very good at public appearances and could whip up a speech with no difficulty at all, but that his position required that he read his speeches, and the man was illiterate. So he used his wits to outsmart everybody. He had a sheet of paper with something written on it and flashed it around whenever he gave a speech. And thus his efficiency and other good qualities were undeniable to all the country bumpkins. But one day a literate stranger came along and noticed that the hero was reading his speech while holding the sheet upside down. He began to laugh and pointed out the lie to everyone.

Don Genaro again paused for a moment and looked at me, squinting his eyes, and asked, "Do you think that the hero was caught? Not a chance. He faced everyone calmly and said, 'Upside down? Why should the position of the sheet matter if you know how to read?' And the bumpkins agreed with him."

Don Juan and don Genaro both exploded into laughter. Don Genaro patted me gently on the back. It was as if I were the hero of the story. I felt embarrassed and laughed nervously. I thought that perhaps there was a hidden meaning to it, but I did not dare ask.

Don Juan moved closer to me. He leaned over and whispered in my right ear, "Don't you think it's funny?" Don Genaro also leaned over towards me and whispered in my left ear, "What did he say?" I had an automatic reaction to both questions and made an involuntary synthesis.

"Yes. I thought he asked it's funny," I said.

They were obviously aware of the effect of their maneuvers; they laughed until tears rolled down their cheeks. Don Genaro, as usual, was more exaggerated than don Juan; he fell backwards and rolled on his back a few yards away from me. He lay on his stomach, extending his arms and legs out, and whirled around on the ground as

though he were lying on a swivel. He whirled until he got close to me and his foot touched mine. He sat up abruptly and smiled sheepishly.

Don Juan was holding his sides. He was laughing very hard and it seemed that his stomach hurt.

After a while they both leaned over and kept on whispering into my ears. I tried to memorize the sequence of their utterances but after a futile effort I gave up. There were too many.

They whispered in my ears until I again had the sensation that I had been split in two. I became a mist, like the day before, a yellow glow that sensed everything directly. That is, I could "know" things. There were no thoughts involved; there were only certainties. And when I came into contact with a soft, spongy, bouncy feeling, which was outside of me and yet was part of me, I "knew" it was a tree. I sensed it was a tree by its odor. It did not smell like any specific tree I could remember, nonetheless something in me "knew" that that peculiar odor was the "essence" of tree. I did not have just the feeling that I knew, nor did I reason my knowledge out, or shuffle clues around. I simply knew that there was something there in contact with me, all around me, a friendly, warm, compelling smell emanating from something which was neither solid nor liquid but an undefined something else, which I "knew" was a tree. I felt that by "knowing" it in that manner I was tapping its essence. I was not repelled by it. It rather invited me to melt with it. It engulfed me or I engulfed it. There was a bond between us which was neither exquisite nor displeasing.

The next sensation I could recollect with clarity was a wave of wonder and exultation. All of me vibrated. It was as if charges of electricity were going through me. They were not painful. They were pleasing, but in such an undetermined form that there was no way of categorizing them. I knew, nevertheless, that whatever I was in contact with was the ground. Some part of me acknowledged with concise certainty that it was the ground. But the instant I tried to discern the infinitude of direct perceptions I was having, I lost all capacity to differentiate my perceptions.

Then all of a sudden I was myself again. I was thinking. It was

such an abrupt transition that I thought I had woken up. Yet there was something in the way I felt that was not quite myself. I knew that there was indeed something missing before I fully opened my eyes. I looked around. I was still in a dream, or having a vision of some sort. My thought processes, however, were not only unimpaired but extraordinarily clear. I made a quick assessment. I had no doubt that don Juan and don Genaro had induced my dreamlike state for a specific purpose. I seemed to be on the verge of understanding what that purpose was when something extraneous to me forced me to pay attention to my surroundings. It took me a long moment to orient myself. I was actually lying on my stomach and what I was lying on was a most spectacular floor. As I examined it, I could not avoid a feeling of awe and wonder. I could not conceive what it was made of. Irregular slabs of some unknown substance had been placed in a most intricate yet simple fashion. They had been put together but were not stuck to the ground or to each other. They were elastic and gave when I attempted to pry them apart with my fingers, but once I released the tension they went right back to their original position.

I tried to get up and was seized by the most outlandish sensory distortion. I had no control over my body; in fact, my body did not seem to be my own. It was inert; I had no connection to any of its parts and when I tried to stand up I could not move my arms and I wobbled helplessly on my stomach, rolling on my side. The momentum of my wobbling almost made me do a complete turn onto my stomach again. My outstretched arms and legs prevented me from turning over and I came to rest on my back. In that position I caught a glimpse of two strangely shaped legs and the most distorted feet I had ever seen. It was my body! I seemed to be wrapped up in a tunic. The thought that came to my mind was that I was experiencing a scene of myself as a cripple or an invalid of some sort. I tried to curve my back and look at my legs but I could only jerk my body. I was looking directly at a yellow sky, a deep, rich lemon-yellow sky. It had grooves or canals of a deeper yellow tone and an endless number of protuberances that hung like drops of water. The total effect of that incredible sky was staggering. I could not determine if the protuber-

ances were clouds. There were also areas of shadows and areas of different tones of yellow which I discovered as I moved my head from side to side.

Then something else attracted my attention: a sun at the very zenith of the yellow sky, right over my head, a mild sun—judging by the fact that I could stare into it—that cast a soothing, uniform whitish light.

Before I had had time to ponder upon all these unearthly sights, I was violently shaken; my head jerked and bobbed back and forth. I felt I was being lifted. I heard a shrill voice and giggling and I was confronted by a most astounding sight: a giant barefoot female. Her face was round and enormous. Her black hair was cut in pageboy fashion. Her arms and legs were gigantic. She picked me up and lifted me to her shoulders as if I were a doll. My body hung limp. I was looking down her strong back. She had a fine fuzz around her shoulders and down her spine. Looking down from her shoulder, I saw the magnificent floor again. I could hear it giving elastically under her enormous weight and I could see the pressure marks that her feet left on it.

She put me down on my stomach in front of a structure, some sort of building. I noticed then that there was something wrong with my depth perception. I could not figure out the size of the building by looking at it. At moments it seemed ridiculously small, but then after I seemingly adjusted my perception, I truly marveled at its monumental proportions.

The giant girl sat next to me and made the floor squeak. I was touching her enormous knee. She smelled like candy or strawberries. She talked to me and I understood everything she said; pointing to the structure, she told me that I was going to live there.

My prowess of observation seemed to increase as I got over the initial shock of finding myself there. I noticed then that the building had four exquisite dysfunctional columns. They did not support anything; they were on top of the building. Their shape was simplicity itself; they were long and graceful projections that seemed to be reaching for that awesome, incredibly yellow sky. The effect of those

inverted columns was sheer beauty to me. I had a seizure of aesthetic rapture.

The columns seemed to have been made in one piece; I could not even conceive how. The two columns in front were joined by a slender beam, a monumentally long rod that I thought may have served as a railing of some sort, or a veranda overlooking the front.

The giant girl made me slide on my back into the structure. The roof was black and flat and was covered with symmetric holes that let the yellowish glare of the sky show through, creating the most intricate patterns. I was truly awed with the utter simplicity and beauty that had been achieved by those dots of yellow sky showing through those precise holes in the roof, and the patterns of shadows that they created on that magnificent and intricate floor. The structure was square, and outside of its poignant beauty it was incomprehensible to me.

My state of exultation was so intense at that moment that I wanted to weep, or stay there forever. But some force, or tension, or something undefinable began to pull me. Suddenly I found myself out of the structure, still lying on my back. The giant girl was there, but there was another being with her, a woman so big that she reached to the sky and eclipsed the sun. Compared to her the giant girl was just a little girl. The big woman was angry; she grabbed the structure by one of its columns, lifted it up, turned it upside down, and set it on the floor. It was a chair!

That realization was like a catalyst; it triggered some overwhelming perceptions. I went through a series of images that were disconnected but could be made to stand as a sequence. In successive flashes I saw or realized that the magnificent and incomprehensible floor was a straw mat; the yellow sky was the stucco ceiling of a room; the sun was a light bulb; the structure that had evoked such rapture in me was a chair that a child had turned upside down to play house.

I had one more coherent and sequential vision of another mysterious architectural structure of monumental proportions. It stood by itself. It looked almost like a shell of a pointed snail standing with its

tail up. The walls were made of concave and convex plates of some strange purple material; each plate had grooves that seemed more functional than ornamental.

I examined the structure meticulously and in detail and found that it was, like in the case of the previous one, thoroughly incomprehensible. I expected to suddenly adjust my perception to disclose the "true" nature of the structure. But nothing of the sort happened. I then had a conglomerate of alien and inextricable "awarenesses," or "findings," about the building and its function, which did not make sense, because I had no frame of reference for them.

I regained my normal awareness all of a sudden. Don Juan and don Genaro were next to me. I was tired. I looked for my watch; it was gone. Don Juan and don Genaro giggled in unison. Don Juan said that I should not worry about time and that I should concentrate on following certain recommendations that don Genaro had made to me.

I turned to don Genaro and he made a joke. He said that the most important recommendation was that I should learn to write with my finger, to save on pencils and to show off.

They teased me about my notes for a while longer and then I went to sleep.

Don Juan and don Genaro listened to the detailed account of my experience, which I gave them at don Juan's request after I woke up the next day.

"Genaro feels that you've got enough for the time being," don Juan said after I finished talking.

Don Genaro assented with a nod.

"What was the meaning of what I experienced last night?" I asked.

"You caught a glimpse of the most important issue of sorcery," don Juan said. "Last night you peeked into the totality of yourself. But that's of course a meaningless statement for you at this moment. Obviously, arriving at the totality of oneself is not a matter of one's desire to agree, or of one's willingness to learn. Genaro thinks that your body needs time to let the whispering of the *nagual* sink into you."

Don Genaro nodded again.

"Plenty of time," he said, shaking his head up and down. "Twenty or thirty years perhaps."

I did not know how to react. I looked at don Juan for clues. They both had serious expressions.

"Do I really have twenty or thirty years?" I asked.

"Of course not!" don Genaro yelled and they broke into laughter.

Don Juan said that I should return whenever my inner voice told me to, and that in the meantime I should try to assemble all the suggestions that they had made while I was split.

"How do I do that?" I asked.

"By turning off your internal dialogue and letting something in you flow out and expand," don Juan said. "That something is your perception, but don't try to figure out what I mean. Just let the whispering of the *nagual* guide you."

Then he said that the night before I had had two sets of intrinsically different views. One was inexplicable, the other was perfectly natural, and the order in which they had happened pointed to a condition that was intrinsic to all of us.

"One view was the *nagual*, the other the *tonal*," don Genaro added.

I wanted him to explain his statement. He looked at me and patted me on the back.

Don Juan stepped in and said that the first two views were the "nagual," and that don Genaro had selected a tree and the ground as the points for emphasis. The other two were views of the "tonal" that he himself had selected; one of them was my perception of the world as an infant.

"It appeared to be an alien world to you, because your perception had not been trimmed yet to fit the desired mold," he said.

"Was that the way I really saw the world?" I asked.

"Certainly," he said. "That was your memory."

I asked don Juan whether the feeling of aesthetic appreciation that had enraptured me was also part of my memory.

"We go into those views as we are today," he said. "You were seeing that scene as you would see it now. Yet the exercise was one of perception. That was the scene of a time when the world became for

you what it is now. A time when a chair became a chair."

He did not want to discuss the other scene.

"That wasn't a memory of my childhood," I said.

"That's right," he said. "It was something else."

"Was it something I will see in the future?" I asked.

"There's no future!" he exclaimed cuttingly. "The future is only a way of talking. For a sorcerer there is only the here and now."

He said that there was essentially nothing to say about it because the purpose of the exercise had been to open the wings of my perception, and that although I had not flown on those wings I had nonetheless touched four points which would be inconceivable to reach from the point of view of my ordinary perception.

I began to gather my things to leave. Don Genaro helped me pack my notebook; he put it in the bottom of my briefcase.

"It'll be warm and cozy there," he said and winked. "You can rest assured that it won't catch cold."

Then don Juan seemed to change his mind about my leaving and started to talk about my experience. I automatically tried to grab my briefcase from don Genaro's hands, but he dropped it to the floor before I touched it. Don Juan was talking with his back turned to me. I scooped up the briefcase and hurriedly searched for my notebook. Don Genaro had really packed it so tightly that I had a hellish time getting to it; finally I took it out and began to write. Don Juan and don Genaro were staring at me.

"You're in terrible shape," don Juan said, laughing. "You reach for your notebook as a drunkard reaches for the bottle."

"As a loving mother reaches for her child," don Genaro snapped.

"As a priest reaches for his crucifix," don Juan added.

"As a woman reaches for her panties," don Genaro yelled.

They went on and on presenting similes and howling with laughter as they walked me to my car.

PART THREE

The Sorcerers' Explanation

THREE WITNESSES TO THE NAGUAL

Upon returning home I was faced again with the task of organizing my field notes. What don Juan and don Genaro had made me experience became all the more poignant as I recapitulated the events. I noticed, however, that my usual reaction of indulging for months in bewilderment and awe over what I had gone through was not as intense as it had been in the past. Various times, I deliberately attempted to engage my feelings, as I had done before, in speculation and even in self-pity; but something was missing. I had also had the intention of writing down a number of questions to ask don Juan, don Genaro, or even Pablito. The project failed before I had begun it. There was something in me that prevented my entering into a mood of inquiry or perplexity.

I did not purposely seek to go back to don Juan and don Genaro, but neither did I shy away from the possibility. One day, however, without any premeditation on my part I simply felt that it was time to see them.

In the past, every time I was about to leave for Mexico, I had always had the feeling that there were thousands of important and pressing questions that I wanted to ask don Juan; this time there was nothing on my mind. It was as if after I had worked over my notes I had become emptied of the past and ready for the here and now of don Juan and don Genaro's world.

I had to wait only a few hours before don Juan "found" me in the market of a little town in the mountains of central Mexico. He

greeted me with utmost affection and made a casual suggestion. He said that before we arrived at don Genaro's place, he would like to pay a visit to don Genaro's apprentices, Pablito and Nestor. As I turned off the highway he told me to keep a close watch for any unusual sight on the side of the road or on the road itself. I asked him to give me more precise clues about what he had in mind.

"I can't," he said. "The *nagual* doesn't need precise clues."

I slowed the car down in an automatic response to his reply. He laughed loudly and signaled me with a movement of his hand to keep on driving.

As we approached the town where Pablito and Nestor lived don Juan told me to stop my car. He moved his chin imperceptibly and pointed to a group of medium size boulders on the left side of the road.

"There's the *nagual*," he said in a whisper.

There was no one around. I had expected to see don Genaro. I looked at the boulders again and then I scanned the area around them. There was nothing in sight. I strained my eyes to distinguish anything, a small animal, an insect, a shadow, a strange formation of the rocks, anything unusual. I gave up after a moment and turned to face don Juan. He held my questioning gaze without smiling and then gently pushed my arm with the back of his hand to make me look at the boulders again. I stared at them, then don Juan got out of the car and told me to follow him and examine them.

We walked slowly on a gentle slope for about sixty or seventy yards to the base of the rocks. He stood there for a moment and whispered in my right ear that the "nagual" was waiting for me right at that place. I told him that no matter how hard I tried, all I could distinguish were the rocks and a few tufts of weeds and some cactuses. He insisted, however, that the "nagual" was there, waiting for me.

He ordered me to sit down, turn off my internal dialogue, and keep my unfocused eyes on the top of the boulders. He sat by me and, putting his mouth to my right ear, whispered that the "nagual" had seen me, that it was there although I could not visualize it, and

that my problem was merely one of not being capable of completely shutting off my internal dialogue. I heard every word he said in a state of inner silence. I understood everything yet I was incapable of answering; the effort needed to think and talk would have been impossible. My reactions to his comments were not thoughts proper but rather complete units of feeling, which had all the innuendos of meaning that I usually associate with thinking.

He whispered that it was very difficult to start by oneself on the path towards the "nagual," and that I was indeed most fortunate to have been launched by the moth and its song. He said that by holding the memory of the "moth's call," I could bring it back to aid me.

His words were either an overpowering suggestion or perhaps I summoned that perceptual phenomenon he called the "moth's call," for no sooner had he whispered his words to me than the extraordinary sputtering sound became audible. Its richness of tone made me feel as if I were inside an echo chamber. As the sound grew in loudness or proximity, I also detected, in a dreamlike state, that something was moving on top of the boulders. The movement frightened me so intensely that I immediately regained my crystal clear awareness. My eyes focused on the boulders. Don Genaro was sitting on top of one of them! His feet were dangling; and with the heels of his shoes he was hammering the rock, producing a rhythmical sound that seemed to be synchronized with the "moth's call." He smiled and waved his hand at me. I wanted to think rationally. I had the feeling, the desire to figure out how he got there, or how I saw him there, but I could not involve my reason at all. All I could do, under the circumstances, was to look at him while he sat smiling, waving his hand.

After a moment he seemed to get ready to slide down the round boulder. I saw him stiffening his legs, preparing his feet for landing on the hard ground, and arching his back until he almost touched the surface of the rock in order to gain sliding momentum. But in the middle of his descent his body stopped. I had the impression he got stuck. He kicked a couple of times with both legs as if he were floating in water. He seemed to be trying to get loose from something

that had trapped him by the seat of his pants. He rubbed the sides of his buttocks frantically with both hands. He actually gave me the impression of being painfully caught. I wanted to run to him and aid him, but don Juan held my arm. I heard him say to me, half choking with laughter, "Watch him! Watch him!"

Don Genaro kicked, contorted his body and wiggled from side to side as if he were loosening a nail; then I heard a loud pop and he glided, or was hurled, to where don Juan and I were standing. He landed four or five feet in front of me, on his feet. He rubbed his buttocks and jumped up and down in a dance of pain, yelling profanities.

"The rock didn't want to let me go and grabbed me by the ass," he said to me in a sheepish tone.

I experienced a sensation of unequaled joy. I laughed loudly. I noticed that my mirth was equal to my clarity of mind. I was engulfed at that moment in an overall state of great awareness. Everything around me was crystal clear. I had been drowsy or absent-minded before because of my inner silence. But then something in don Genaro's sudden appearance had created a state of great lucidity.

Don Genaro kept on rubbing his buttocks and jumping up and down for a while longer; then he limped to my car, opened the door and crawled into the back seat.

I automatically turned around to talk to don Juan. He was not anywhere in sight. I started to call him out loud. Don Genaro got out of the car and began to run around in circles also calling don Juan's name in a shrill, frantic tone. It was only then, as I watched him, that I realized he was mimicking me. I had had an attack of such an intense fear upon finding myself alone with don Genaro that I had run around the car three or four times in quite an unconscious manner, yelling don Juan's name.

Don Genaro said that we had to pick up Pablito and Nestor and that don Juan would be waiting for us somewhere along the way.

After I had overcome my initial fright, I told him that I was glad to see him. He teased me about my reaction. He said that don Juan was not like a father to me, but rather like a mother. He made some

remarks and puns about "mothers" that were utterly funny. I was laughing so hard that I did not notice that we had arrived at Pablito's house. Don Genaro told me to stop and he got out of the car. Pablito was standing by the door of his house. He came running and got in the car and sat next to me in the front.

"Let's go to Nestor's place," he said as if he were in a hurry.

I turned to look for don Genaro. He was not around. Pablito urged me in a pleading voice to hurry.

We drove up to Nestor's house. He was also waiting by the door. We got out of the car. I had the feeling that the two of them knew what was going on.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Didn't Genaro tell you?" Pablito asked me with a tone of incredulity.

I assured them that neither don Juan nor don Genaro had mentioned anything to me.

"We're going to a power place," Pablito said.

"What are we going to do there?" I asked.

They both said in unison that they did not know. Nestor added that don Genaro had told him to guide me to the place.

"Did you come from Genaro's house?" Pablito asked.

I mentioned that I had been with don Juan and that we had found don Genaro on the way and that don Juan had left me with him.

"Where did don Genaro go?" I asked Pablito.

But Pablito did not know what I was talking about. He had not seen don Genaro in my car.

"He drove with me to your house," I said.

"I think you had the *nagual* in your car," Nestor said in a frightened tone.

He did not want to sit in the back and crammed next to Pablito in the front.

We drove in silence, except for Nestor's short commands to show the way.

I wanted to think about the events of that morning, but somehow I knew that any attempt to explain them was a fruitless indulging on

my part. I tried to engage Nestor and Pablito in a conversation; they said that they were too nervous inside the car and could not talk. I enjoyed their candid reply and did not press them any further.

After more than an hour's drive, we parked the car on a side road and climbed up the side of a steep mountain. We walked in silence for another hour or so, with Nestor in the lead, and then we stopped at the bottom of a huge cliff, which was perhaps over two hundred feet high with a nearly vertical drop. With half-closed eyes Nestor scanned the ground, looking for a proper place to sit. I was painfully aware that he was clumsy in his scanning movements. Pablito, who was next to me, seemed at various times to be on the verge of stepping in and correcting him, but he restrained himself and relaxed. Then Nestor selected a place, after a moment's hesitation. Pablito sighed with relief. I knew that the place Nestor had selected was the proper one, but I could not figure out how I knew that. Thus I involved myself in the pseudo problem of imagining what place I would have selected myself if I had been leading them. I could not, however, even begin to speculate on the procedure I would have followed. Pablito was obviously aware of what I was doing.

"You can't do that," he whispered to me.

I laughed with embarrassment, as if he had caught me doing something illicit. Pablito laughed and said that don Genaro always walked around in the mountains with both of them and gave each of them the lead from time to time, so he knew that there was no way of imagining what would have been one's choice.

"Genaro says that the reason why there is no way to do that is because there are only right and wrong choices," he said. "If you make a wrong choice your body knows it, and so does the body of everyone else; but if you make a right choice the body knows that and relaxes and forgets right away that there was a choice. You reload your body, see, like a gun, for the next choice. If you want to use your body again for making the same choice, it doesn't work."

Nestor looked at me; he was apparently curious about my taking notes. He nodded affirmatively as if agreeing with Pablito and then smiled for the first time. Two of his upper teeth were crooked.

Pablito explained that Nestor was not mean or morbid but embarrassed by his teeth and that that was the reason he never smiled. Nestor laughed, covering his mouth. I told him that I could send him to a dentist to have his teeth straightened. They thought that my suggestion was a joke and laughed like two children.

"Genaro says that he has to overcome the feeling of shame by himself," Pablito said. "Besides, Genaro says that he's lucky; while everyone else bites the same way, Nestor can split a bone lengthwise with his strong crooked teeth and he can bite a hole through your finger like a nail."

Nestor opened his mouth and showed me his teeth. The left incisor and the canine had grown in sideways. He made his teeth clatter by biting on them and growled like a dog. He made two or three mock advances towards me. Pablito laughed.

I had never seen Nestor so light. The few times I had been with him in the past he had given me the impression of being a middle-aged man. As he sat there smiling with his crooked teeth I marveled at his youthful appearance. He looked like a young man in his early twenties.

Pablito again read my thoughts to perfection.

"He's losing his self-importance," he said. "That's why he's younger."

Nestor nodded affirmatively and without saying a word he let out a very loud fart. I was startled and dropped my pencil.

Pablito and Nestor nearly died laughing. When they had calmed down, Nestor came to my side and showed me a homemade contraption that made a peculiar sound when squeezed with the hand. He explained that don Genaro had showed him how to make it. It had a minute bellows, and the vibrator could be any kind of leaf that was placed in a slit between the two pieces of wood that were the compressors. Nestor said that the kind of sound it produced depended on the type of leaf that one used as a vibrator. He wanted me to try it and showed me how to squeeze the compressors to produce a certain type of sound, and how to open them in order to produce another.

"What do you use it for?" I asked.

They both exchanged a glance.

"That's his spirit catcher, you fool," Pablito said cuttingly.

His tone was peevish but his smile was friendly. They were both such a strange unnerving mixture of don Genaro and don Juan.

I became absorbed in a horrible thought. Were don Juan and don Genaro playing tricks on me? I had a moment of supreme terror. But something snapped inside of my stomach and I instantly became calm again. I knew that Pablito and Nestor were using don Genaro and don Juan as models for behavior. I myself had found that I also was behaving more and more like them.

Pablito said that Nestor was lucky to have a spirit catcher and that he did not have one himself.

"What shall we do here?" I asked Pablito.

Nestor answered as if I had addressed the question to him.

"Genaro told me that we have to wait here, and while we wait we should laugh and enjoy ourselves," he said.

"How long do you think we have to wait?" I asked.

He did not answer; he shook his head and looked at Pablito as if asking him.

"I have no idea," Pablito said.

We got involved then in a lively conversation about Pablito's sisters. Nestor teased him that his oldest sister had such a mean look that she could kill lice with her eyes. He said that Pablito was afraid of her because she was so strong that once in a fit of anger she plucked a handful of his hair as if it were chicken feathers.

Pablito conceded that his oldest sister had been a beast, but that the "nagual" had fixed her and brought her into line. After he had told me the story of how she was made to behave I realized that Pablito and Nestor never mentioned don Juan's name but referred to him as the "nagual." Apparently don Juan had intervened in Pablito's life and coerced all his sisters into leading a more harmonious life. Pablito said that after the "nagual" was through with them they were like saints.

Nestor wanted to know what I did with my notes. I explained my

work to them. I had the weird sensation that they were genuinely interested in what I was saying and I ended up talking about anthropology and philosophy. I felt ludicrous and wanted to stop, but I found myself immersed in my elucidation and unable to cut it short. I had the unsettling sensation that both of them as a team were somehow forcing me into that lengthy explanation. Their eyes were fixed on me. They did not seemed to be bored or tired.

I was in the middle of a comment when I heard the faint sound of the "moth's call." My body stiffened and I never finished my sentence.

"The *nagual* is here," I said automatically.

Nestor and Pablito exchanged a look that I thought was sheer terror and jumped to my side and flanked me. Their mouths were open. They looked like frightened children.

I had an inconceivable sensory experience then. My left ear began to move. I felt it sort of wiggling by itself. It practically turned my head in a half circle until I was facing what I thought to be the east. My head tilted slightly to the right; in that position I was capable of detecting the rich sputtering sound of the "moth's call." It sounded as if it were far away, coming from the northeast. Once I had established the direction, my ear picked up an incredible amount of sounds. I had no way of knowing, however, whether they were memories of sounds I had heard before or actual sounds which were being produced then.

The place where we were was the rugged west slope of a mountain range. Towards the northeast there were groves of trees and patches of mountain shrubs. My ear seemed to pick up the sound of something heavy moving over rocks, coming from that direction.

Nestor and Pablito were either responding to my actions or they themselves were hearing the same sounds. I would have liked to ask them, but I did not dare; or perhaps I was incapable of interrupting my concentration.

Nestor and Pablito huddled against me, by my sides, when the sound became louder and closer. Nestor seemed to be the one who was most affected by it; his body shivered uncontrollably. At one

moment my left arm began to shake; it raised without my volition until it was almost level with my face, and then it pointed to an area of shrubs. I heard a vibratory sound or a roar; it was a familiar sound to me. I had heard it many years before under the influence of a psychotropic plant. I detected in the shrubs a gigantic black shape. It was as if the shrubs themselves were becoming darker by degrees until they had changed into an ominous blackness. It had no definite form, but it moved. It seemed to breathe. I heard a chilling scream, which was mixed with the yells of terror of Pablito and Nestor; and the shrubs, or the black shape into which they had turned, flew up towards us.

I could not maintain my equanimity. Somehow something in me faltered. The shape first hovered over us, and then engulfed us. The light around us became opaque. It was as if the sun had set. Or as if all of a sudden it had become twilight. I felt Nestor and Pablito's heads under my armpits; I brought my arms down over their heads in an unconscious protective movement and I fell, spinning backwards.

I did not reach the rocky ground, however, for an instant later I found myself standing up flanked by Pablito and Nestor. Both of them, although taller than I, seemed to have shriveled; by arching their legs and backs they were actually shorter than I and fit under my arms.

Don Juan and don Genaro were standing in front of us. Don Genaro's eyes glittered like the eyes of a cat at night. Don Juan's eyes had the same glow. I had never seen don Juan look that way. He was truly awesome. More so than don Genaro. He seemed younger and stronger than usual. Looking at both of them, I had the maddening feeling that they were not men like myself.

Pablito and Nestor whined quietly. Then don Genaro said that we were the picture of the Trinity. I was the Father, Pablito was the Son, and Nestor the Holy Ghost. Don Juan and don Genaro laughed in a booming tone. Pablito and Nestor smiled meekly.

Don Genaro said that we had to disentangle ourselves, because embraces were permissible only between men and women, or between a man and his burro.

I realized then that I was standing on the same spot I had been before, and that obviously I had not spun backwards as I thought I had. In fact, Nestor and Pablito were also on the same spot they had been on.

Don Genaro signaled Pablito and Nestor with a movement of his head. Don Juan signaled me to follow them. Nestor took the lead and pointed out a sitting place for me and another one for Pablito. We sat in a straight line, about fifty yards from the place where don Juan and don Genaro stood motionless at the base of the cliff. As I kept on staring at them, my eyes went involuntarily out of focus. I knew I had definitely crossed them, because I was seeing four of them. Then my left eye image of don Juan became superimposed on the right eye image of don Genaro; the result of the merger was that I saw an iridescent being standing in between don Juan and don Genaro. It was not a man as I ordinarily see men. It was rather a ball of white fire; something like fibers of light covered it. I shook my head; the double image was dispelled, and yet the sight of don Juan and don Genaro as luminous beings persisted. I was seeing two strange elongated luminous objects. They looked like white iridescent footballs with fibers, fibers that had a light of their own.

The two luminous beings shivered; I actually saw their fibers shaking and then they whizzed out of sight. They were pulled up by a long filament, a cobweb that seemed to shoot out from the top of the cliff. The sensation I had was that a long beam of light or a luminous line had dropped from the rock and lifted them up. I perceived the sequence with my eyes and with my body.

I was also capable of noticing enormous disparities in my mode of perceiving, but I was incapable of speculating about them as I would have ordinarily done. Thus, I was aware that I was looking straight at the base of the cliff, and yet I was seeing don Juan and don Genaro on the top as if I had tilted my head up forty-five degrees.

I wanted to feel afraid, perhaps to cover my face and weep, or do something else within my normal range of responses. But I seemed to be locked. My desires were not thoughts, as I know thoughts, therefore they could not evoke the emotional response I was accustomed to eliciting in myself.

Don Juan and don Genaro plunged to the ground. I felt that they had done so judging by the consuming feeling of falling that I experienced in my stomach.

Don Genaro remained where he had landed, but don Juan walked towards us and sat down, behind me, to my right. Nestor was in a crouching position; his legs tucked in against his stomach; he was resting his chin on his cupped palms; his forearms served as supports by being propped against his thighs. Pablito was sitting with his body slightly bent forward, holding his hands against his stomach. I noticed then that I had placed my forearms across my umbilical region and I was holding myself by the skin on my sides. I had grabbed myself so hard that my sides ached.

Don Juan spoke in a dry murmur, addressing all of us.

"You must fix your gaze on the *nagual*," he said. "All thoughts and words must be washed away."

He repeated it five or six times. His voice was strange, unknown to me; it gave me the actual feeling of the scales on the skin of a lizard. That simile was a feeling, not a conscious thought. Each of his words peeled, like scales; there was such an eerie rhythm to them; they were muffled, dry, like soft coughing; a rhythmical murmur made into a command.

Don Genaro stood motionless. As I stared at him I could not keep my image conversion, and my eyes crossed involuntarily. In that state I noticed again a strange luminosity in don Genaro's body. My eyes were beginning to close, or to tear. Don Juan came to my rescue. I heard him giving a command not to cross the eyes. I felt a soft tap on my head. He had apparently hit me with a pebble. I saw the pebble bounce a couple of times on the rocks near me. He must have also hit Nestor and Pablito; I heard the sound of other pebbles as they bounced on the rocks.

Don Genaro adopted a strange dancing posture. His knees were bent, his arms were extended to his sides, his fingers outstretched. He seemed to be about to twirl; in fact, he half whirled around and then he was pulled up. I had the clear perception that he had been hoisted up by the line of a giant caterpillar that lifted his body to the

very top of the cliff. My perception of the upward movement was a most weird mixture of visual and bodily sensations. I half saw and half felt his flight to the top. There was something that looked or felt like a line or an almost imperceptible thread of light pulling him up. I did not see his flight upward in the sense I would follow a bird in flight with my eyes. There was no linear sequence to his movement. I did not have to raise my head to keep him within my field of vision. I saw the line pulling him, then I felt his movement in my body, or with my body, and the next instant he was on the very top of the cliff, hundreds of feet up.

After a few minutes he plummeted down. I felt his falling and groaned involuntarily.

Don Genaro repeated his feat three more times. Each time, my perception was tuned. During his last upward leap I could actually distinguish a series of lines emanating from his midsection, and I knew when he was about to ascend or descend, judging by the way the lines of his body moved. When he was about to leap upward, the lines bent upward; the opposite happened when he was about to leap downward; the lines bent outward and down.

After his fourth leap don Genaro came to us and sat down behind Pablito and Nestor. Then don Juan moved to the front and stood where don Genaro had been. He stood motionless for a while. Don Genaro gave some brief instructions to Pablito and Nestor. I did not understand what he had said. I glanced at them and saw that he had made each one hold a rock and place it against the area of their navels. I was wondering whether I also had to do that, when he told me that the precaution did not apply to me but nonetheless I should have a rock within reach just in case I got ill. Don Genaro jutted his chin forward to indicate that I should gaze at don Juan, then he said something unintelligible; he repeated it, and although I did not understand his words, I knew that it was more or less the same formula that don Juan had voiced. The words did not really matter; it was the rhythm, the dryness of tone, the coughlike quality. I had the certainty that whatever language don Genaro was using was more appropriate than Spanish for the staccato quality of the rhythm.

Don Juan did exactly as don Genaro had initially done, but then instead of leaping upward he twirled around like a gymnast. In a semi-aware way I expected him to land on his feet again. He never did. His body kept on twirling a few feet above the ground. The circles were very rapid at first, then they slowed down. From where I was I could see don Juan's body hanging, like don Genaro's body had, from a threadlike light. He whirled slowly as if allowing us to fully view him. Then he began to ascend; he gained altitude until he reached the top of the cliff. Don Juan was actually floating as if he had no weight. His turns were slow and evoked the image of an astronaut in space whirling around in a state of weightlessness.

I got dizzy as I watched him. My feeling of getting ill seemed to trigger him and he began to whirl at a greater speed. He moved away from the cliff and as he gained speed I became utterly sick. I grabbed the rock and placed it on my stomach. I pressed it against my body as hard as I could. Its touch soothed me a bit. The act of reaching for the rock and holding it against me had allowed me a moment's break. Although I had not taken my eyes away from don Juan, I had nevertheless broken my concentration. Before I reached for the rock I felt that the speed which his floating body had gained was blurring his shape; he looked like a rotating disk and then a light that was spinning. After I had placed the rock against my body his speed diminished; he looked like a hat floating in the air, a kite that bobbed back and forth.

The movement of the kite was even more unsettling. I became uncontrollably ill. I heard the flapping of bird wings and after a moment of uncertainty I knew that the event had ended.

I felt so ill and exhausted that I lay down to sleep. I must have dozed off for a while. I opened my eyes when someone shook my arm. It was Pablito. He spoke to me in a frantic tone and said that I could not fall asleep, because if I did all of us would die. He insisted that we had to leave right away even if we had to drag ourselves on all fours. He also seemed to be physically exhausted. In fact, I had the idea that we should spend the night there. The prospect of walking to my car in the dark seemed most dreadful to me. I tried to con-

vince Pablito, who was getting more frantic. Nestor was so ill that he was indifferent.

Pablito sat down in a state of total despair. I made an effort to organize my thoughts. It was quite dark by then, although there was still enough light to distinguish the rocks around us. The quietness was exquisite and soothing. I enjoyed the moment fully, but suddenly my body jumped; I heard the distant sound of a branch being cracked. I automatically turned to Pablito. He seemed to know what had happened to me. We grabbed Nestor by the armpits and practically lifted him up. We dragged him and ran. He apparently was the only one who knew the way. He gave us short commands from time to time.

I was not concerned with what we did. My attention was focused on my left ear, which seemed to be a unit independent from the rest of me. Some feeling in me forced me to stop every so often and scan the surroundings with my ear. I knew something was following us. It was something massive; it crushed small rocks as it advanced.

Nestor regained a degree of composure and walked by himself, holding on to Pablito's arm occasionally.

We arrived at a group of trees. By then it was completely dark. I heard a sudden and extremely loud cracking sound. It was like the cracking of a monstrous whip that lashed the tops of the trees. I could feel a wave of some sort rippling overhead.

Pablito and Nestor screamed and scrambled out of there at full speed. I wanted them to stop. I was not sure I could run in the dark. But at that instant I heard and felt a series of heavy exhalations right behind me. My fright was indescribable.

The three of us ran together until we reached the car. Nestor led us in some unknown way.

I thought that I should leave them at their houses and then go to a hotel in town. I would not have gone to don Genaro's place for anything in the world; but Nestor did not want to leave the car, neither did Pablito and neither did I. We ended up at Pablito's house. He sent Nestor to buy some beer and cola while his mother and sisters prepared food for us. Nestor made a joke and asked if he could be es-

corted by the oldest sister in case he was attacked by dogs or drunkards. Pablito laughed and told me that he had been entrusted with Nestor.

"Who has entrusted you with him?" I asked.

"Power, of course!" he replied. "At one time Nestor was older than me, but Genaro did something to him and now he's much younger. You saw that, didn't you?"

"What did don Genaro do?" I asked.

"You know, he made him a child again. He was too important and heavy. He would've died if he was not turned younger."

There was something truly candid and endearing about Pablito. The simplicity of his explanation was overwhelming to me. Nestor was indeed younger; not only did he look younger, but he acted like an innocent child. I knew without any doubt that he genuinely felt like one.

"I take care of him," Pablito continued. "Genaro says that it's an honor to look after a warrior. Nestor is a fine warrior."

His eyes shone, like don Genaro's. He patted me vigorously on the back and laughed.

"Wish him well, Carlitos," he said. "Wish him well."

I was very tired. I had a strange surge of happy sadness. I told him that I came from a place where people rarely if ever wish one another well.

"I know," he said. "The same thing happened to me. But I'm a warrior now and I can afford to wish him well."

THE STRATEGY OF A SORCERER

Don Juan was at don Genaro's house when I got there in the late morning. I greeted him.

"Hey, what happened to you? Genaro and I waited for you all night," he said.

I knew that he was joking. I felt light and happy. I had systematically refused to dwell on whatever I had witnessed the day before. At that moment, however, my curiosity was uncontrollable and I asked him about it.

"Oh, that was a simple demonstration of all the things that you should know before you get the sorcerers' explanation," he said. "What you did yesterday made Genaro feel that you have stored enough power to go for the real thing. You have obviously followed his suggestions. Yesterday you let the wings of your perception unfold. You were stiff but you still perceived all the comings and goings of the *nagual*; in other words, you *saw*. You also confirmed something which at this time is even more important than *seeing*, and that was the fact that you can now place your unwavering attention on the *nagual*. And that's what will decide the outcome of the last issue, the sorcerers' explanation.

"Pablito and you will go into it at the same time. It is a gift of power to be accompanied by such a fine warrior."

That seemed to be all he wanted to say. After a while I asked about don Genaro.

"He's around," he said. "He went into the bushes to make the mountains tremble."

I heard at that moment a distant rumble, like muffled thunder.

Don Juan looked at me and laughed.

He made me sit down and asked if I had eaten. I had, so he handed me my notebook and led me to don Genaro's favorite spot, a large rock on the west side of the house, overlooking a deep ravine.

"Now is when I need your total attention," don Juan said. "Attention in the sense that warriors understand attention: a true pause, in order to allow the sorcerers' explanation to fully soak through you. We are at the end of our task; all the necessary instruction has been given to you and now you must stop, look back, and reconsider your steps. Sorcerers say that this is the only way to consolidate one's gains. I definitely would have preferred to tell you all this at your own place of power, but Genaro is your benefactor and his spot may be more beneficial to you in an instance like this."

What he was referring to as my "place of power" was a hilltop in the desert of northern Mexico, which he had shown me years before and had "given" to me as my own.

"Should I just listen to you without taking notes?" I asked.

"This is indeed a tricky maneuver," he said. "On the one hand, I need your total attention, and on the other, you need to be calm and self-assured. The only way for you to be at ease is to write, so this is the time to bring forth all your personal power and fulfill this impossible task of being yourself without being yourself."

He slapped his thigh and laughed.

"I've already told you that I am in charge of your *tonal* and that Genaro is in charge of your *nagual*," he went on. "It has been my duty to help you in every matter concerning your *tonal* and everything that I've done with you or to you was done to accomplish one single task, the task of cleaning and reordering your island of the *tonal*. That's my job as your teacher. Genaro's task as your benefactor is to give you undeniable demonstrations of the *nagual* and to show how to get to it."

"What do you mean by cleaning and reordering the island of the *tonal*?" I asked.

"I mean the total change which I've been telling you about from the first day we met," he said. "I've told you countless times that a

most drastic change was needed if you wanted to succeed in the path of knowledge. That change is not a change of mood, or attitude, or outlook; that change entails the transformation of the island of the *tonal*. You have accomplished that task."

"Do you think that I've changed?" I asked.

He hesitated and then laughed loudly.

"You are as idiotic as ever," he said. "And yet you're not the same. See what I mean?"

He mocked my taking notes and said that he missed don Genaro, who would have enjoyed the absurdity of my writing down the sorcerers' explanation.

"At this precise point a teacher would usually say to his disciple that they have arrived at a final crossroad," he continued. "To say such a thing is misleading, though. In my opinion there is no final crossroad, no final step to anything. And since there is no final step to anything, there shouldn't be any secrecy about any part of our lot as luminous beings. Personal power decides who can or who cannot profit by a revelation; my experiences with my fellow men have proven to me that very, very few of them would be willing to listen; and of those few who listen even fewer would be willing to act on what they have listened to; and of those who are willing to act even fewer have enough personal power to profit by their acts. So, the matter of secrecy about the sorcerers' explanation boils down to a routine, perhaps a routine as empty as any other routine.

"At any rate, you know now about the *tonal* and the *nagual*, which are the core of the sorcerers' explanation. To know about them seems to be quite harmless. We are sitting here, talking innocently about them as if they were just an ordinary topic of conversation. You are calmly writing as you've done for years. The scenery around us is a picture of calmness. It is early afternoon, the day is beautiful, the mountains around us have made a protective cocoon for us. One doesn't have to be a sorcerer to realize that this place, which speaks of Genaro's power and impeccability, is the most appropriate background for opening the door; for that is what I'm doing today, opening the door for you. But before we venture beyond this point a fair warning is required; a teacher is supposed to speak in earnest terms

and warn his disciple that the harmlessness and placidity of this moment are a mirage, that there is a bottomless abyss in front of him, and that once the door opens there is no way to close it again."

He paused for a moment.

I felt light and happy; from don Genaro's place of predilection I had a breathtaking view. Don Juan was right; the day and the scenery were more than beautiful. I wanted to worry about his admonitions and warnings, but somehow the tranquility around me screened out all my attempts and I found myself hoping that perhaps he was speaking only of metaphorical dangers.

Don Juan suddenly began to talk again.

"The years of hard training are only a preparation for the warrior's devastating encounter with . . ."

He paused again, looked at me with squinting eyes, and chuckled.

". . . with whatever lies out there, beyond this point," he said.

I asked him to explain his ominous statements.

"The sorcerers' explanation, which doesn't seem like an explanation at all, is lethal," he said. "It seems harmless and charming, but as soon as the warrior opens himself to it, it delivers a blow that no one can parry."

He broke into a loud laugh.

"So, be prepared for the worst, but don't hurry or panic," he proceeded. "You don't have any time, and yet you're surrounded by eternity. What a paradox for your *reason*!"

Don Juan stood up. He wiped off the debris on a smooth bowl-like depression and sat there comfortably, with his back against the rock, facing the northwest. He indicated another place for me where I too could sit comfortably. I was to his left, also facing the northwest. The rock was warm and gave me a feeling of serenity, of protection. It was a mild day; a soft wind made the heat of the afternoon sun very pleasant. I took off my hat but don Juan insisted that I should wear it.

"You're now facing in the direction of your own place of power," he said. "That is a prop that may protect you. Today you need all the props you can use. Your hat may be another one of them."

"Why are you warning me, don Juan? What's really going to happen?" I asked.

"What will happen here today depends on whether or not you have enough personal power to focus your unwavering attention on the wings of your perception," he said.

His eyes glittered. He seemed to be more excited than I had ever seen him before. I thought that there was something unusual in his voice, perhaps an unaccustomed nervousness.

He said that the occasion required that right there on my benefactor's place of predilection he recapitulate for me every step that he had taken in his struggle to help me clean and reorder my island of the "tonal." His recapitulation was meticulous and took him about five hours. In a brilliant and clear manner he gave me a succinct account of everything he had done to me since the day we met. It was as if a dam had been broken. His revelations caught me completely off guard. I had accustomed myself to be the aggressive prober; thus, to have don Juan – who was always the reluctant party – elucidating the points of his teachings in such an academic manner was as astounding as his wearing a suit in Mexico City. His control of the language, his dramatic timing, and his choice of words were so extraordinary that I had no way to explain them rationally. He said that at that point a teacher had to speak to the individual warrior in exclusive terms, that the way he was talking to me and the clarity of his explanation were part of his last trick, and that only at the end would everything that he was doing make sense to me. He talked without stopping, until he had finished presenting his recapitulation. And I wrote down everything he said without any conscious effort on my part.

"Let me begin by telling you that a teacher never seeks apprentices and no one can solicit the teachings," he said. "It's always an omen which points out an apprentice. A warrior who may be in the position of becoming a teacher must be alert in order to catch his cubic centimenter of chance. I *saw* you just before we met; you had a good *tonal*, like that girl we encountered in Mexico City. After I *saw* you I waited, very much like what we did with the girl that night in

the park. The girl went by without paying attention to us. But you were brought to me by a man who ran away after babbling inanities. You were left there, facing me, also babbling inanities. I knew I had to act fast and hook you; you yourself would've had to do something of that sort if that girl would've talked to you. What I did was to grab you with my *will*."

Don Juan was alluding to the extraordinary way he had looked at me the day we met. He had fixed his gaze on me and I had had an inexplicable feeling of vacuity, or numbness. I could not find any logical explanation for my reaction and I have always believed that after our first meeting I went back to see him only because I had become obsessed with that look.

"That was my quickest way of hooking you," he said. "It was a direct blow to your *tonal*. I numbed it by focusing my *will* on it."

"How did you do that?" I asked.

"The warrior's gaze is placed on the right eye of the other person," he said. "And what it does is to stop the internal dialogue, then the *nagual* takes over; thus, the danger of that maneuver. Whenever the *nagual* prevails, even if it is only for an instant, there is no way of describing the feeling that the body experiences. I know that you have spent endless hours trying to figure out what you felt and that to this day you haven't been able to. I accomplished what I wanted, though. I hooked you."

I told him that I could still remember him staring at me.

"The gaze on the right eye is not a stare," he said. "It's rather a forceful grabbing that one does through the eye of the other person. In other words, one grabs something that is behind the eye. One has the actual physical sensation that one is holding something with the *will*."

He scratched his head, tilting his hat to the front, over his face.

"This is, naturally, only a way of talking," he continued. "A way of explaining weird physical sensations."

He ordered me to stop writing and look at him. He said that he was going to "grab" my "tonal" gently with his "will." The sensation I experienced was a repetition of what I had felt on that first day we

had met and on other occasions when don Juan had made me feel that his eyes were actually touching me, in a physical sense.

"But, how do you make me feel you're touching me, don Juan? What do you actually do?" I asked.

"There's no way of exactly describing what one does," he said. "Something snaps forward from someplace below the stomach; that something has direction and can be focused on anything."

I again felt something like soft tweezers clasping some undefined part of me.

"It works only when the warrior learns to focus his *will*," don Juan explained after he moved his eyes away. "There's no way of practicing it, therefore I have not recommended or encouraged its use. At a given moment in the life of a warrior it simply happens. No one knows how."

He remained quiet for a while. I felt extremely apprehensive. Don Juan suddenly began to speak again.

"The secret is in the left eye," he said. "As a warrior progresses on the path of knowledge his left eye can clasp anything. Usually the left eye of a warrior has a strange appearance; sometimes it becomes permanently crossed, or it becomes smaller than the other, or larger, or different in some way."

He glanced at me and in a joking manner pretended to examine my left eye. He shook his head in mock disapproval and chuckled.

"Once the apprentice has been hooked, the instruction begins," he continued. "The first act of a teacher is to introduce the idea that the world we think we see is only a view, a description of the world. Every effort of a teacher is geared to prove this point to his apprentice. But accepting it seems to be one of the hardest things one can do; we are complacently caught in our particular view of the world, which compels us to feel and act as if we knew everything about the world. A teacher, from the very first act he performs, aims at stopping that view. Sorcerers call it stopping the internal dialogue, and they are convinced that it is the single most important technique that an apprentice can learn.

"In order to stop the view of the world which one has held since

the cradle, it is not enough to just wish or make a resolution. One needs a practical task; that practical task is called the right way of walking. It seems harmless and nonsensical. As everything else which has power in itself or by itself, the right way of walking does not attract attention. You understood it and regarded it, at least for several years, as a curious way of behaving. It didn't dawn on you until very recently that that was the most effective way to stop your internal dialogue."

"How does the right way of walking stop the internal dialogue?" I asked.

"Walking in that specific manner saturates the *tonal*," he said. "It floods it. You see, the attention of the *tonal* has to be placed on its creations. In fact, it is that attention that creates the order of the world in the first place; so, the *tonal* must be attentive to the elements of its world in order to maintain it, and must, above all, uphold the view of the world as internal dialogue."

He said that the right way of walking was a subterfuge. The warrior, first by curling his fingers, drew attention to the arms; and then by looking, without focusing his eyes, at any point directly in front of him on the arc that started at the tip of his feet and ended above the horizon, he literally flooded his "tonal" with information. The "tonal," without its one-to-one relation with the elements of its description, was incapable of talking to itself, and thus one became silent.

Don Juan explained that the position of the fingers did not matter at all, that the only consideration was to draw attention to the arms by clasping the fingers in various unaccustomed ways, and that the important thing was the manner in which the eyes, by being kept unfocused, detected an enormous number of features of the world without being clear about them. He added that the eyes in that state were capable of picking out details which were too fleeting for normal vision.

"Together with the right way of walking," don Juan went on, "a teacher must teach his apprentice another possibility, which is even more subtle: the possibility of acting without believing, without ex-

pecting rewards—acting just for the hell of it. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I told you that the success of a teacher's enterprise depends on how well and how harmoniously he guides his apprentice in this specific respect."

I told don Juan that I did not remember him ever discussing "acting just for the hell of it" as a particular technique; all I could recollect were his constant but loose comments about it.

He laughed and said that his maneuver had been so subtle that it had bypassed me to that day. He then reminded me of all the nonsensical joking tasks that he used to give me every time I had been at his house. Absurd chores such as arranging firewood in patterns, encircling his house with an unbroken chain of concentric circles drawn in the dirt with my finger, sweeping debris from one place to another, and so forth. The tasks also included acts that I had to perform by myself at home, such as wearing a black cap, or tying my left shoe first, or fastening my belt from right to left.

The reason I had never taken them in any other vein except as jokes was that he would invariably tell me to forget about them after I had established them as regular routines.

As he recapitulated all the tasks he had given me I realized that by making me perform senseless routines he had indeed implanted in me the idea of acting without really expecting anything in return.

"Stopping the internal dialogue is, however, the key to the sorcerers' world," he said. "The rest of the activities are only props; all they do is accelerate the effect of stopping the internal dialogue."

He said that there were two major activities or techniques used to accelerate the stopping of the internal dialogue: erasing personal history and "dreaming." He reminded me that during the early stages of my apprenticeship he had given me a number of specific methods for changing my "personality." I had recorded them in my notes and had forgotten about them for years until I realized their importance. Those specific methods seemed at first to be highly idiosyncratic devices to coerce me into modifying my behavior.

He explained that the art of a teacher was to deviate the apprentice's attention from the main issues. A poignant example of that art

was the fact that I had not realized until that day that he had actually tricked me into learning a most crucial point: to act without expecting rewards.

He said that in line with that rationale he had rallied my interest around the idea of "seeing," which, properly understood, was the act of dealing directly with the "nagual," an act that was an unavoidable end result of the teachings but an unattainable task as a task per se.

"What was the point of tricking me that way?" I asked.

"Sorcerers are convinced that all of us are a bunch of nincompoops," he said. "We can never relinquish our crummy control voluntarily, thus we have to be tricked."

His contention was that by making me focus my attention on a pseudo task, learning to "see," he had successfully accomplished two things. First he had outlined the direct encounter with the "nagual," without mentioning it, and second he had tricked me into considering the real issues of his teachings as inconsequential affairs. Erasing personal history and "dreaming" were never as important to me as "seeing." I regarded them as very entertaining activities. I even thought that they were the practices for which I had the greatest facility.

"Greatest facility," he said mockingly when he heard my comments. "A teacher must not leave anything to chance. I've told you that you were correct in feeling that you were being tricked. The problem was that you were convinced that that tricking was directed at fooling your *reason*. For me, tricking meant to distract your attention, or to trap it as the case required."

He looked at me with squinting eyes and pointed all around us with a sweeping gesture of his arm.

"The secret of all this is one's attention," he said.

"What do you mean, don Juan?"

"All of this exists only because of our attention. This very rock where we're sitting is a rock because we have been forced to give our attention to it as a rock."

I wanted him to explain that idea. He laughed and raised an accusing finger at me.

"This is a recapitulation," he said. "We'll get to that later."

He asserted that because of his decoy maneuver I became interested in erasing personal history and "dreaming." He said that the effects of those two techniques were ultimately devastating if they were exercised in their totality, and that then his concern was the concern of every teacher, not to let his apprentice do anything that would plunge him into aberration and morbidity.

"Erasing personal history and *dreaming* should only be a help," he said. "What any apprentice needs to buffer him is temperance and strength. That's why a teacher introduces the warrior's way, or living like a warrior. This is the glue that joins together everything in a sorcerer's world. Bit by bit a teacher must forge and develop it. Without the sturdiness and level-headedness of the warrior's way there is no possibility of withstanding the path of knowledge."

Don Juan said that learning the warrior's way was an instance when the apprentice's attention had to be trapped rather than deviated, and that he had trapped my attention by pushing me out of my ordinary circumstances every time I had gone to see him. Our roaming around the desert and the mountains had been the means to accomplish that.

The maneuver of altering the context of my ordinary world by taking me for hikes and hunting was another instance of his system that had bypassed me. Context disarrangement meant that I did not know the ropes and my attention had to be focused on everything don Juan did.

"What a trick! Uh?" he said and laughed.

I laughed with awe. I had never realized that he was so aware.

He then enumerated his steps in guiding and trapping my attention. When he had finished his account he added that a teacher had to take into consideration the personality of the apprentice, and that in my case he had to be careful because I was violent and would have thought nothing of killing myself out of despair.

"What a preposterous fellow you are, don Juan," I said in jest, and he exploded in a giant laugh.

He explained that in order to help erase personal history three

other techniques were taught. They were: losing self-importance, assuming responsibility, and using death as an adviser. The idea was that, without the beneficial effect of those three techniques, erasing personal history would involve the apprentice in being shifty, evasive and unnecessarily dubious about himself and his actions.

Don Juan asked me to tell him what had been the most natural reaction I had had in moments of stress, frustration and disappointment before I became an apprentice. He said that his own reaction had been wrath. I told him that mine had been self-pity.

"Although you're not aware of it, you had to work your head off to make that feeling a natural one," he said. "By now there is no way for you to recollect the immense effort that you needed to establish self-pity as a feature of your island. Self-pity bore witness to everything you did. It was just at your fingertips, ready to advise you. Death is considered by a warrior to be a more amenable adviser, which can also be brought to bear witness on everything one does, just like self-pity, or wrath. Obviously, after an untold struggle you had learned to feel sorry for yourself. But you can also learn, in the same way, to feel your impending end, and thus you can learn to have the idea of your death at your fingertips. As an adviser, self-pity is nothing in comparison to death."

Don Juan pointed out then that there was seemingly a contradiction in the idea of change; on the one hand, the sorcerers' world called for a drastic transformation, and on the other, the sorcerers' explanation said that the island of the "tonal" was complete and not a single element of it could be removed. Change, then, did not mean obliterating anything but rather altering the use assigned to those elements.

"Take self-pity for instance," he said. "There is no way to get rid of it for good; it has a definite place and character in your island, a definite façade which is recognizable. Thus, every time the occasion arises, self-pity becomes active. It has history. If you then change the façade of self-pity, you would have shifted its place of prominence."

I asked him to explain the meaning of his metaphors, especially

the idea of changing façades. I understood it as perhaps the act of playing more than one role at the same time.

"One changes the façade by altering the use of the elements of the island," he replied. "Take self-pity again. It was useful to you because you either felt important and deserving of better conditions, better treatment, or because you were unwilling to assume responsibility for the acts that brought you to the state that elicited self-pity, or because you were incapable of bringing the idea of your impending death to witness your acts and advise you.

"Erasing personal history and its three companion techniques are the sorcerers' means for changing the façade of the elements of the island. For instance, by erasing your personal history, you have denied use to self-pity; in order for self-pity to work you had to feel important, irresponsible, and immortal. When those feelings were altered in some way, it was no longer possible for you to feel sorry for yourself.

"The same was true with all the other elements which you've changed on your island. Without using those four techniques you never could've succeeded in changing them. But changing façades means only that one has assigned a secondary place to a formerly important element. Your self-pity is still a feature of your island; it will be there in the back in the same way that the idea of your impending death, or your humbleness, or your responsibility for your acts were there, without ever being used."

Don Juan said that once all those techniques had been presented, the apprentice arrived at a crossroad. Depending on his sensibility, the apprentice did one of two things. He either took the recommendations and suggestions made by his teacher at their face value, acting without expecting rewards; or he took everything as a joke or an aberration.

I remarked that in my own case I was confused by the word "techniques." I always expected a set of precise directions, but he had given me only vague suggestions; and I was incapable of taking them seriously or acting in accordance with his stipulations.

"That was your mistake," he said. "I had to decide then whether

or not to use power plants. You could've used those four techniques to clean and reorder your island of the *tonal*. They would've led you to the *nagual*. But not all of us are capable of reacting to simple recommendations. You, and I for that matter, needed something else to shake us; we needed those power plants."

It had indeed taken me years to realize the importance of those early suggestions made by don Juan. The extraordinary effect that psychotropic plants had had on me was what gave me the bias that their use was the key feature of the teachings. I held on to that conviction and it was only in the later years of my apprenticeship that I realized that the meaningful transformations and findings of sorcerers were always done in states of sober consciousness.

"What would have happened if I had taken your recommendations seriously?" I asked.

"You would have gotten to the *nagual*," he replied.

"But would I have gotten to the *nagual* without a benefactor?"

"Power provides according to your impeccability," he said. "If you had seriously used those four techniques, you would've stored enough personal power to find a benefactor. You would've been impeccable and power would have opened all the necessary avenues. That is the rule."

"Why didn't you give me more time?" I asked.

"You had all the time you needed," he said. "Power showed me the way. One night I gave you a riddle to work out; you had to find your beneficial spot in front of the door of my house. That night you performed marvelously under pressure and in the morning you fell asleep over a very special rock that I had put there. Power showed me that you had to be pushed mercilessly or you wouldn't do a thing."

"Did the power plants help me?" I asked.

"Certainly," he said. "They opened you up by stopping your view of the world. In this respect power plants have the same effect on the *tonal* as the right way of walking. Both flood it with information and force the internal dialogue to come to a stop. The plants are excellent for that, but very costly. They cause untold damage to the body. This is their drawback, especially with the devil's weed."

"If you knew that they were so dangerous, why did you give me so many of them, so many times?" I asked.

He assured me that the details of the procedure were decided by power itself. He said that although the teachings were supposed to cover the same issues with all apprentices, the order was different for each one, and that he had gotten repeated indications that I needed a great deal of coercion in order to bother with anything.

"I was dealing with a sassy immortal being that had no respect for his life or his death," he said, laughing.

I brought up the fact that he had described and discussed those plants in terms of anthropomorphic qualities. His references to them were always as if the plants had personalities. He replied that that was a prescribed means for deviating the apprentice's attention away from the real issue, which was stopping the internal dialogue.

"If they are used only to stop the internal dialogue, what's their connection with the ally?" I asked.

"That's a difficult point to explain," he said. "Those plants lead the apprentice directly to the *nagual*, and the ally is an aspect of it. We function at the center of *reason* exclusively, regardless of who we are or where we come from. *Reason* can naturally account in one way or another for everything that happens within its view of the world. The ally is something which is outside of that view, outside the realm of *reason*. It can be witnessed only at the center of *will* at times when our ordinary view has stopped, therefore it is properly the *nagual*. Sorcerers, however, can learn to perceive the ally in a most intricate way, and in doing so they get too deeply immersed in a new view. So, in order to protect you from that fate, I did not emphasize the ally as sorcerers usually do. Sorcerers have learned after generations of using power plants to account in their views for everything that is accountable about them. I would say that sorcerers, by using their *will*, have succeeded in enlarging their views of the world. My teacher and benefactor were the clearest examples of that. They were men of great power, but they were not men of knowledge. They never broke the bounds of their enormous views and thus never arrived at the totality of themselves, yet they knew about it. It wasn't that they lived aberrant lives, claiming things beyond their

reach; they knew that they had missed the boat and that only at their death would the total mystery be revealed to them. Sorcery had given them only a glimpse but never the real means to get to that evasive totality of oneself.

"I gave you enough of the sorcerers' view without letting you get hooked by it. I said that only if one pits two views against each other can one weasel between them to arrive at the real world. I meant that one can arrive at the totality of oneself only when one fully understands that the world is merely a view, regardless of whether that view belongs to an ordinary man or to a sorcerer.

"Here is where I varied from the tradition. After a lifelong struggle I know that what matters is not to learn a new description but to arrive at the totality of oneself. One should get to the *nagual* without maligning the *tonal*, and above all, without injuring one's body. You took those plants following the exact steps I followed myself. The only difference was that instead of plunging you into them I stopped when I judged that you had stored enough views of the *nagual*. That is the reason why I never wanted to discuss your encounters with power plants, or let you talk obsessively about them; there was no point in elaborating about the unspeakable. Those were true excursions into the *nagual*, the unknown."

I mentioned that my need to talk about my perceptions under the influence of psychotropic plants was due to an interest in elucidating a hypothesis of my own. I was convinced that with the aid of such plants he had provided me with memories of inconceivable ways of perceiving. Those memories, which at the time I experienced them may have seemed idiosyncratic and disconnected from anything meaningful, were later assembled into units of meaning. I knew that don Juan had artfully guided me each time, and that any assembling of meaning was made under his guidance.

"I don't want to emphasize those events, or explain them," he said dryly. "The act of dwelling on explanations will put us right back where we don't want to be; that is, we'll be thrown back into a view of the world, this time a much larger view."

Don Juan said that after the apprentice's internal dialogue has been stopped by the effect of power plants, an unavoidable impasse

develops. The apprentice begins to have second thoughts about his whole apprenticeship. In don Juan's opinion, even the most willing apprentice at that point would suffer a serious loss of interest.

"Power plants shake the *tonal* and threaten the solidity of the whole island," he said. "It is at this time that the apprentice retreats, and wisely so; he wants to get out of the whole mess. It is also at this time that the teacher sets up his most artful trap, the worthy opponent. This trap has two purposes. First, it enables the teacher to hold his apprentice, and second, it enables the apprentice to have a point of reference for further use. The trap is a maneuver that brings forth a worthy opponent into the arena. Without the aid of a worthy opponent, who's not really an enemy but a thoroughly dedicated adversary, the apprentice has no possibility of continuing on the path of knowledge. The best of men would quit at this point if it were left up to them to decide. I brought to you as a worthy opponent the finest warrior one can find, la Catalina."

Don Juan was talking about a time, years before, when he had led me into a long-range battle with an Indian sorceress.

"I put you in bodily contact with her," he proceeded. "I chose a woman because you trust women. To disarrange that trust was very difficult for her. She confessed to me years later that she would've liked to quit, because she liked you. But she's a great warrior and in spite of her feelings she nearly blasted you off the planet. She disarranged your *tonal* so intensely that it was never the same again. She actually changed features on the face of your island so deeply that her acts sent you into another realm. One may say that she could've become your benefactor herself, had it not been that you were not cut out to be a sorcerer like she is. There was something amiss between you two. You were incapable of being afraid of her. You nearly lost your marbles one night when she accosted you, but in spite of that you were attracted to her. She was a desirable woman to you no matter how scared you were. She knew that. I caught you one day in town looking at her, shaking in your boots with fear and yet drooling at her.

"Because of the acts of a worthy opponent, then, an apprentice can be either blasted to pieces or changed radically. La Catalina's actions

with you, since they did not kill you—not because she did not try hard enough but because you were durable—had a beneficial effect on you, and also provided you with a decision.

"The teacher uses the worthy opponent to force the apprentice into the choice of his life. The apprentice must choose between the warrior's world and his ordinary world. But no decision is possible unless the apprentice understands the choice; thus a teacher must have a thoroughly patient and understanding attitude and must lead his man with a sure hand to that choice, and above all he must make sure that his apprentice chooses the world and the life of a warrior. I accomplished this by asking you to help me overcome la Catalina. I told you she was about to kill me and that I needed your help to get rid of her. I gave you fair warning about the consequences of your choice and plenty of time to decide whether or not to make it."

I clearly remembered that don Juan had set me loose that day. He told me that if I did not want to help him I was free to leave and never come back. I felt at that moment that I was at liberty to choose my own course and had no further obligation to him.

I left his house and drove away with a mixture of sadness and happiness. I was sad to leave don Juan and yet I was happy to be through with all his disconcerting activities. I thought of Los Angeles and my friends and all the routines of my daily life which were waiting for me, those little routines that had always given me so much pleasure. For a while I felt euphoric. The weirdness of don Juan and his life was behind me and I was free.

My happy mood did not last long, however. My desire to leave don Juan's world was untenable. My routines had lost their power. I tried to think of something I wanted to do in Los Angeles, but there was nothing. Don Juan had once told me that I was afraid of people and had learned to defend myself by not wanting anything. He said that not wanting anything was a warrior's finest attainment. In my stupidity, however, I had enlarged the sensation of not wanting anything and made it lapse into not liking anything. Thus, my life was boring and empty.

He was right and as I zoomed north on the highway the full impact of my own unsuspected madness finally hit me. I began to realize the scope of my choice. I was actually leaving a magical world of continual renewal for my soft, boring life in Los Angeles. I began to recollect my empty days. I remembered one Sunday in particular. I had felt restless all day with nothing to do. No friends had come to visit me. No one had invited me to a party. The people I wanted to see were not home, and worst of all, I had seen all the movies in town. In the late afternoon, in ultimate despair, I searched the list of movies again and found one I had never wanted to see. It was being shown in a town thirty-five miles away. I went to see it, and hated it, but even that was better than having nothing to do.

Under the impact of don Juan's world, I had changed. For one thing, since I had met him I had not had time to be bored. That in itself was enough for me; don Juan had indeed made sure I would choose the warrior's world. I turned around and drove back to his house.

"What would have happened if I had chosen to go back to Los Angeles?" I asked.

"That would have been an impossibility," he said. "That choice didn't exist. All that was required of you was to allow your *tonal* to become aware of having decided to join the world of sorcerers. The *tonal* doesn't know that decisions are in the realm of the *nagual*. When we think we decide, all we're doing is acknowledging that something beyond our understanding has set up the frame of our so-called decision, and all we do is to acquiesce.

"In the life of a warrior there is only one thing, one issue alone which is really undecided: how far one can go on the path of knowledge and power. That is an issue which is open and no one can predict its outcome. I once told you that the freedom a warrior has is either to act impeccably or to act like a nincompoop. Impeccability is indeed the only act which is free and thus the true measure of a warrior's spirit."

Don Juan said that after the apprentice had made his decision to

join the world of sorcerers, the teacher gave him a pragmatic chore, a task that he had to fulfill in his day-to-day life. He explained that the task, which is designed to fit the apprentice's personality, is usually a sort of farfetched life situation, which the apprentice is supposed to get into as a means of permanently affecting his view of the world. In my own case, I understood the task more as a lively joke than a serious life situation. As time passed, however, it finally dawned on me that I had to be earnest about it.

"After the apprentice has been given his sorcery task he's ready for another type of instruction," he proceeded. "He is a warrior then. In your case, since you were no longer an apprentice, I taught you the three techniques that help *dreaming*: disrupting the routines of life, the gait of power, and not-doing. You were very consistent, dumb as an apprentice and dumb as a warrior. You dutifully wrote down everything I said and everything that happened to you, but you did not act exactly as I had told you to. So I still had to blast you with power plants."

Don Juan then gave me a step-by-step rendition of how he had driven my attention away from "dreaming," making me believe that the important problem was a very difficult activity he had called not-doing, which consisted of a perceptual game of focusing attention on features of the world that were ordinarily overlooked, such as the shadows of things. Don Juan said that his strategy had been to set not-doing apart by imposing the most strict secrecy on it.

"Not-doing, like everything else, is a very important technique, but it was not the main issue," he said. "You fell for the secrecy. You, a blabbermouth, having to keep a secret!"

He laughed and said that he could imagine the troubles I must have gone through to keep my mouth shut.

He explained that disrupting routines, the gait of power, and not-doing were avenues for learning new ways of perceiving the world, and that they gave a warrior an inkling of incredible possibilities of action. Don Juan's idea was that the knowledge of a separate and pragmatic world of "dreaming" was made possible through the use of those three techniques.

"*Dreaming* is a practical aid devised by sorcerers," he said. "They were not fools; they knew what they were doing and sought the usefulness of the *nagual* by training their *tonal* to let go for a moment, so to speak, and then grab again. This statement doesn't make sense to you. But that's what you've been doing all along: training yourself to let go without losing your marbles. *Dreaming*, of course, is the crown of the sorcerers' efforts, the ultimate use of the *nagual*."

He went through all the exercises of not-doing that he had made me perform, the routines of my daily life that he had isolated for disrupting, and all the occasions when he had forced me to engage in the gait of power.

"We're coming to the end of my recapitulation," he said. "Now we have to talk about Genaro."

Don Juan said that there had been a very important omen the day I met don Genaro. I told him that I could not remember anything out of the ordinary. He reminded me that on that day we had been sitting on a bench in a park. He said that he had mentioned earlier to me that he was going to wait for a friend I had never met before, and then when the friend appeared I singled him out, without any hesitation, in the midst of a huge crowd. That was the omen that made them realize that don Genaro was my benefactor.

I remembered when he mentioned it that as we sat talking I had turned around and seen a small lean man who radiated an extraordinary vitality, or grace, or simple gusto; he had just turned a corner into the park. In a joking mood I told don Juan that his friend was approaching us, and that he was most certainly a sorcerer judging by the way he looked.

"Genaro recommended what to do with you from that day on," don Juan proceeded. "As your guide into the *nagual*, he gave you impeccable demonstrations, and every time he performed an act as a *nagual* you were left with a knowledge that defied and bypassed your *reason*. He disassembled your view of the world, although you are not aware of that yet. Again in this instance you behaved just like in the case of the power plants, you needed more than was necessary. A few of the *nagual*'s onslaughts should be enough to dismantle one's

view; but even to this day, after all the *nagual*'s barrages, your view seems invulnerable. Oddly enough, that's your best feature.

"All in all, then, Genaro's job has been to lead you into the *nagual*. But here we have a strange question. What was being led into the *nagual*?"

He urged me with a movement of his eyes to answer the question.

"My *reason*?" I asked.

"No, *reason* is meaningless there," he replied. "*Reason* craps out in an instant when it is out of its safe narrow bounds."

"Then it was my *tonal*," I said.

"No, the *tonal* and the *nagual* are the two inherent parts of ourselves," he said dryly. "They cannot be led into each other."

"My perception?" I asked.

"You've got it," he yelled as if I were a child giving the right answer. "We're coming now to the sorcerers' explanation. I've warned you already that it won't explain anything and yet . . ."

He paused and looked at me with shiny eyes.

"This is another of the sorcerers' tricks," he said.

"What do you mean? What's the trick?" I asked with a touch of alarm.

"The sorcerers' explanation, of course," he replied. "You'll see that for yourself. But let's continue with it. Sorcerers say that we are inside a bubble. It is a bubble into which we are placed at the moment of our birth. At first the bubble is open, but then it begins to close until it has sealed us in. That bubble is our perception. We live inside that bubble all of our lives. And what we witness on its round walls is our own reflection."

He lowered his head and looked at me askance. He giggled.

"You're goofing," he said. "You're supposed to raise a point here."

I laughed. Somehow his warnings about the sorcerers' explanation plus the realization of the awesome range of his awareness had finally begun to take their toll on me.

"What was the point I was supposed to raise?" I asked.

"If what we witness on the walls is our own reflection, then the thing that's being reflected must be the real thing," he said, smiling.

"That's a good point," I said in a joking tone.

My reason could easily follow that argument.

"The thing reflected is our view of the world," he said. "That view is first a description, which is given to us from the moment of our birth until all our attention is caught by it and the description becomes a view.

"The teacher's task is to rearrange the view, to prepare the luminous being for the time when the benefactor opens the bubble from the outside."

He went into another studied pause and made another remark about my lack of attention judged by my incapacity to make an appropriate comment or question.

"What should've been my question?" I asked.

"Why should the bubble be opened?" he replied.

He laughed loudly and patted my back when I said, "That's a good question."

"Of course!" he exclaimed. "It has to be a good question for you, it's one of your own.

"The bubble is opened in order to allow the luminous being a view of his totality," he went on. "Naturally this business of calling it a bubble is only a way of talking, but in this case it is an accurate way.

"The delicate maneuver of leading a luminous being into the totality of himself requires that the teacher work from inside the bubble and the benefactor from outside. The teacher reorders the view of the world. I have called that view the island of the *tonal*. I've said that everything that we are is on that island. The sorcerers' explanation says that the island of the *tonal* is made by our perception, which has been trained to focus on certain elements; each of those elements and all of them together form our view of the world. The job of a teacher, insofar as the apprentice's perception is concerned, consists of reordering all the elements of the island on one half of the bubble. By now you must have realized that cleaning and reordering the island of the *tonal* means regrouping all its elements on the side of *reason*. My task has been to disarrange your ordinary view, not to destroy it but to force it to rally on the side of *reason*. You've done that better than anyone I know."

He drew an imaginary circle on the rock and divided it in two along a vertical diameter. He said that the art of a teacher was to force his disciple to group his view of the world on the right half of the bubble.

"Why the right half?" I asked.

"That's the side of the *tonal*," he said. "The teacher always addresses himself to that side, and by presenting his apprentice on the one hand with the warrior's way he forces him into reasonableness, and sobriety, and strength of character and body; and by presenting him on the other hand with unthinkable but real situations, which the apprentice cannot cope with, he forces him to realize that his *reason*, although it is a most wonderful affair, can only cover a small area. Once the warrior is confronted with his incapacity to reason everything out, he will go out of his way to bolster and defend his defeated *reason*, and to that effect he will rally everything he's got around it. The teacher sees to that by hammering him mercilessly until all his view of the world is on one half of the bubble. The other half of the bubble, the one that has been cleared, can then be claimed by something sorcerers call *will*.

"We can better explain this by saying that the task of the teacher is to wipe clean one half of the bubble and to reorder everything on the other half. The benefactor's task then is to open the bubble on the side that has been cleaned. Once the seal is broken, the warrior is never the same. He has then the command of his totality. Half of the bubble is the ultimate center of *reason*, the *tonal*. The other half is the ultimate center of *will*, the *nagual*. That is the order that should prevail; any other arrangement is nonsensical and petty, because it goes against our nature; it robs us of our magical heritage and reduces us to nothing."

Don Juan stood up and stretched his arms and back and walked around to loosen up his muscles. It was a bit cold by then.

I asked him if we were through.

"Why, the show hasn't even started yet!" he exclaimed and laughed. "That was only the beginning."

He looked at the sky and pointed to the west with a casual movement of his hand.

"In about an hour the *nagual* will be here," he said and smiled. He sat down again.

"We have one single issue left," he continued. "Sorcerers call it the secret of the luminous beings, and that is the fact that we are perceivers. We men and all the other luminous beings on earth are perceivers. That is our bubble, the bubble of perception. Our mistake is to believe that the only perception worthy of acknowledgment is what goes through our *reason*. Sorcerers believe that *reason* is only one center and that it shouldn't take so much for granted.

"Genaro and I have taught you about the eight points that make the totality of our bubble of perception. You know six points. Today Genaro and I will further clean your bubble of perception and after that you will know the two remaining points."

He abruptly changed the topic and asked me to give him a detailed account of my perceptions of the day before, starting from the point where I saw don Genaro sitting on a rock by the road. He did not make any comments or interrupt me at all. When I had finished, I added an observation of my own. I had talked to Nestor and Pablito in the morning and they had given me accounts of their perceptions, which were similar to mine. My point was that he himself had told me that the *nagual* was an individual experience which only the observer can witness. The day before there were three observers and all of us had witnessed more or less the same thing. The differences were expressed only in terms of how each of us felt or reacted to any specific instance of the whole phenomenon.

"What happened yesterday was a demonstration of the *nagual* for you, and for Nestor and Pablito. I'm their benefactor. Between Genaro and myself, we canceled out the center of *reason* in all three of you. Genaro and I had enough power to make you agree on what you were witnessing. Several years ago, you and I were with a bunch of apprentices one night, but I didn't have enough power by myself alone to make all of you witness the same thing."

He said that, judging by what I had told him I had perceived the day before and from what he had "seen" about me, his conclusion was that I was ready for the sorcerers' explanation. He added that so was Pablito, but he was uncertain about Nestor.

"To be ready for the sorcerers' explanation is a very difficult accomplishment," he said. "It shouldn't be, but we insist on indulging in our lifelong view of the world. In this respect you and Nestor and Pablito are alike. Nestor hides behind his shyness and gloom, Pablito behind his disarming charm; you hide behind your cockiness and words. All are views that seem to be unchallengeable; and as long as you three persist in using them, your bubbles of perception have not been cleared and the sorcerers' explanation will have no meaning."

In a spirit of jest I said that I had been obsessed with the famous sorcerers' explanation for a very long time, but the closer I got to it the further it seemed to be. I was going to add a joking comment when he took the words right out of my mouth.

"Wouldn't it be something if the sorcerers' explanation turns out to be a dud?" he asked in the midst of loud laughter.

He patted me on the back and seemed to be delighted, like a child anticipating a pleasant event.

"Genaro is a stickler for the rule," he said in a confiding tone. "There's nothing to this confounded explanation. If it would've been up to me I would have given it to you years ago. Don't put too much stock in it."

He looked up and examined the sky.

"Now you are ready," he said in a dramatic and solemn tone. "It's time to go. But before we leave this place I have to tell you one last thing: The mystery, or the secret, of the sorcerers' explanation is that it deals with unfolding the wings of perception."

He put his hand over my writing pad and said that I should go to the bushes and take care of my bodily functions and after that I should take off my clothes and leave them in a bundle right where we were. I looked at him questioningly and he explained that I had to be naked, but that I could keep my shoes and my hat on.

I insisted on knowing why I had to be naked. Don Juan laughed and said that the reason was rather personal and had to do with my own comfort, and that I myself had told him that that was the way I wanted it. His explanation baffled me. I felt that he was playing a joke on me or that, in conformity with what he had revealed to me,

he was simply displacing my attention. I wanted to know why he was doing that.

He began to talk about an incident that had happened to me years before while we had been in the mountains of northern Mexico with don Genaro. On that occasion they were explaining to me that "reason" could not possibly account for everything that took place in the world. In order to give me an undeniable demonstration of it don Genaro performed a magnificent leap as a "nagual," and "elongated" himself to reach the top of some peaks ten or fifteen miles away. Don Juan said that I missed the issue, and that as far as convincing my "reason" was concerned, don Genaro's demonstration was a failure, but from the point of view of my bodily reaction it was a riot.

The bodily reaction that don Juan was referring to was something which was very vivid in my mind. I saw don Genaro disappear in front of my very eyes as if a wind had swished him away. His leap or whatever he had done had had such a profound effect on me that I felt as if his movement had ripped something in my intestines. My bowels became loose and I had to throw away my pants and shirt. My discomfort and embarrassment knew no limits; I had to walk naked, wearing only a hat, on a heavily trafficked highway until I got to my car. Don Juan reminded me that it was then that I had told him not to let me ruin my clothes again.

After I had taken my clothes off we walked a few hundred feet to a very large rock overlooking the same ravine. He made me look down. There was a drop of over a hundred feet. He then told me to turn off my internal dialogue and listen to the sounds around us.

After a few moments I heard the sound of a pebble bouncing from rock to rock on its way down to the bottom of the ravine. I heard every single bounce of the pebble with inconceivable clarity. Then I heard another pebble being thrown, and another one yet. I lifted my head to align my left ear to the direction of the sound and saw don Genaro sitting on top of the rock, twelve to fifteen feet from where we were. He was casually tossing pebbles down into the ravine.

He yelled and cackled when I saw him and he said that he had been hiding there waiting for me to discover him. I had a moment of

bafflement. Don Juan whispered in my ear repeatedly that my "reason" was not invited to that event, and that I should give up the nagging desire to control everything. He said that the "nagual" was a perception only for me, and that that was the reason Pablito had not seen the "nagual" in my car. He added, as if reading my unvoiced feelings, that although the "nagual" was for me alone to witness, it still was don Genaro himself.

Don Juan took me by the arm and in a playful manner led me to where don Genaro was sitting. Don Genaro stood up and came closer to me. His body radiated a heat that I could see, a glow which dazzled me. He came to my side and without touching me he put his mouth close to my left ear and began to whisper. Don Juan also began whispering in my other ear. Their voices were synchronized. They were both repeating the same statements. They said that I should not be afraid, and that I had long powerful fibers, which were not there to protect me, for there was nothing to protect, or to be protected from, but that they were there to guide my "nagual's" perception in very much the same way my eyes guided my normal "tonal's" perception. They told me that my fibers were all around me, that through them I could perceive everything at once, and that one single fiber was enough for a leap from the rock into the ravine, or up from the ravine to the rock.

I had listened to everything they had whispered. Every word seemed to have had a unique connotation for me; I could retain every utterance and then play it back as if I were a tape recorder. They both urged me to leap to the bottom of the ravine. They said that I should first feel my fibers, then isolate one that went all the way down to the bottom of the ravine and follow it. As they spoke their commands I actually could match their words with adequate feelings. I sensed an itching all over me, especially a most peculiar sensation which was indiscernible in itself but approximated the sensation of a "long itching." My body could actually feel the bottom of the ravine and I sensed that feeling as an itching in some undefined area of my body.

Don Juan and don Genaro kept on coaxing me to slide through

that feeling, but I did not know how. I then heard don Genaro's voice alone.

He said that he was going to jump with me; he grabbed me, or pushed me, or embraced me, and plunged with me into the abyss. I had the ultimate sensation of physical anguish. It was as if my stomach was being chewed and devoured. It was a mixture of pain and pleasure of such intensity and duration that all I could do was to yell and yell at the top of my lungs. When the sensation subsided I saw an inextricable cluster of sparks and dark masses, beams of light and cloudlike formations. I could not tell whether my eyes were open or closed, or where my eyes were, or where my body was for that matter. Then I sensed the same physical anguish, although not as pronounced as the first time, and next I had the impression I had woken up and I found myself standing on the rock with don Juan and don Genaro.

Don Juan said that I had goofed again, that it was useless to leap if the perception of the leap was going to be chaotic. Both of them repeated countless times in my ears that the "nagual" by itself was of no use, that it had to be tempered by the "tonal." They said that I had to leap willingly and be aware of my act.

I hesitated, not so much because I was afraid but because I was reluctant. I felt my vacillation as if my body were swinging from side to side like a pendulum. Then some strange mood overtook me and I leaped with all my corporealness. I wanted to think as I took the plunge but I could not. I saw as if through a fog the walls of the narrow gorge and the jutting rocks at the bottom of the ravine. I did not have a sequential perception of my descent, I had instead the sensation that I was actually on the ground at the bottom; I distinguished every feature of the rocks in a short circle around me. I noticed that my view was not unidirectional and stereoscopic from the level of the eyes, but flat and all around me. After a moment I panicked and something pulled me up like a yo-yo.

Don Juan and don Genaro made me perform the leap over and over. After every jump don Juan urged me to be less reticent and unwilling. He said, time and time again, that the sorcerers' secret in

using the "nagual" was in our perception, that leaping was simply an exercise in perception, and that it would end only after I had succeeded in perceiving, as a perfect "tonal," what was at the bottom of the ravine.

At one moment I had an inconceivable sensation. I was fully and soberly aware that I was standing on the edge of the rock with don Juan and don Genaro whispering in my ears, and then in the next instant I was looking at the bottom of the ravine. Everything was perfectly normal. It was almost dark by then, but there was still enough light to make everything absolutely recognizable as in the world of my everyday life. I was watching some bushes when I heard a sudden noise, a rock rolling down. I saw instantly a good size rock tumbling down the wall of the ravine towards me. In a flash I also saw don Genaro throwing it. I had an attack of panic and an instant later I had been pulled back to the site on top of the rock. I looked around; don Genaro was not there any more. Don Juan began to laugh and said that don Genaro had left because he could not stand my stench. I then had the embarrassing realization that I was truly a mess. Don Juan had been right in making me take my clothes off. He walked me to a stream nearby and washed me like a horse, scooping water with my hat and throwing it at me while he made hilarious comments about having saved my pants.

THE BUBBLE OF PERCEPTION

I spent the day by myself at don Genaro's house. I slept most of the time. Don Juan came back in the late afternoon and we hiked, in complete silence, to a nearby range of mountains. We stopped at dusk and sat on the edge of a deep gorge until it was almost dark. Then don Juan led me to another place close by, a monumental cliff with a sheer vertical rock wall. The cliff was unnoticeable from the trail that led to it; don Juan, however, had shown it to me several times before. He had made me look over the edge and had told me that the whole cliff was a place of power, especially the base of it, which was a canyon several hundred feet down. Every time I had looked into it I had had a discomforting chill; the canyon was always dark and menacing.

Before we reached the place, don Juan said that I had to go on by myself and meet Pablito on the edge of the cliff. He recommended that I should relax and perform the gait of power in order to wash away my nervous tiredness.

Don Juan stepped aside, to the left of the trail, and the darkness simply swallowed him. I wanted to stop and examine where he had gone, but my body did not obey. I began to jog although I was so tired that I could hardly keep on my feet.

When I reached the cliff I could not see anyone there and I went on jogging in place, breathing deeply. After a while I relaxed a bit; I stood motionless with my back against a rock, and I noticed then the shape of a man a few feet away from me. He was sitting, hiding his

head in his arms. I had a moment of intense fright and recoiled, but then I explained to myself that the man must be Pablito, and without any hesitation I advanced towards him. I called Pablito's name out loud. I figured that he must have been uncertain of who I was and had become so scared that he had covered his head not to look. But before I reached him some inexplicable fear took possession of me. My body froze on the spot with my right arm already extended to touch him. The man lifted his head up. It was not Pablito! His eyes were two enormous mirrors, like a tiger's eyes. My body jumped backwards; my muscles tensed and then released the tension without the slightest influence of my volition, and I performed a backward leap, so fast and so far that under normal conditions I would have plunged into a grandiose speculation about it. As it was, however, my fright was so out of proportion that I had no inclination for pondering, and I would have run out of there had it not been that someone held my arm forcibly. The feeling that someone was holding me by the arm threw me into total panic; I screamed. My outburst, instead of being the shriek I thought it should have been, was a long chilling yell.

I turned to face my assailant. It was Pablito, who was shaking even more than me. My nervousness was at its peak. I could not talk, my teeth chattered and ripples went through my back, making me jerk involuntarily. I had to breathe through my mouth.

Pablito said, between chatters, that the "nagual" had been waiting for him, that he had barely gotten out of its clutches when he bumped into me, and that I had nearly killed him with my yell. I wanted to laugh and made the most weird sounds imaginable. When I regained my calmness I told Pablito that apparently the same thing had happened to me. The end result in my case had been that my fatigue had vanished; I felt instead an uncontainable surge of strength and well-being. Pablito seemed to be experiencing the same sensations; we began to giggle in a nervous silly way.

I heard the sound of soft and careful steps in the distance. I detected the sound before Pablito. He appeared to react to my stiffening. I had the certainty that someone was approaching the place

where we were. We turned in the direction of the sound; a moment later the silhouettes of don Juan and don Genaro became visible. They were walking calmly and stopped four or five feet away from us; don Juan was facing me and don Genaro faced Pablito. I wanted to tell don Juan that something had scared me nearly out of my wits, but Pablito squeezed my arm. I knew what he meant. There was something strange about don Juan and don Genaro. As I looked at them my eyes began to get out of focus.

Don Genaro gave a sharp command. I did not understand what he had said, but I "knew" he had meant that we should not cross our eyes.

"The darkness has settled on the world," don Juan said, looking at the sky.

Don Genaro drew a half-moon on the hard ground. For a moment it seemed to me that he had used some iridescent chalk, but then I realized that he was not holding anything in his hands; I was perceiving the imaginary half-moon that he had drawn with his finger. He made Pablito and me sit on the inner curve of the convex edge, while he and don Juan sat cross-legged on the extreme ends of the half-moon, six or seven feet away from us.

Don Juan spoke first; he said that they were going to show us their allies. He told us that if we would gaze at their left sides, between their hips and their rib bones, we would "see" something like a rag or a handkerchief hanging from their belts. Don Genaro added that next to the rags on their belts there were two round buttonlike things, and that we should gaze at their belts until we "saw" the rags and the buttons.

Before don Genaro had spoken I had already noticed some flat item, like a piece of cloth, and one round pebble that hung from their belts. Don Juan's allies were darker and more menacing than don Genaro's. My reaction was a mixture of curiosity and fear. My reactions were experienced in my stomach and I was not judging anything in a rational manner.

Don Juan and don Genaro reached for their belts and seemed to unhook the dark pieces of cloth. They took them with their left

hands; don Juan flung his in the air above his head, but don Genaro let his drop to the ground gently. The pieces of cloth stretched as if the hurling and the dropping had made them spread like perfectly smooth handkerchiefs; they descended slowly, bobbing like kites. The movement of don Juan's ally was the exact replica of what I had perceived him doing when he had whirled around days before. As the pieces of cloth got closer to the ground, they became solid, round and massive. They first curled as though they had fallen over a door knob, then they expanded. Don Juan's grew into a voluminous shadow. It took the lead and moved towards us, crushing small rocks and hard lumps of dirt. It came within four or five feet of us to the very dip of the half-moon, between don Juan and don Genaro. At one moment I thought it was going to roll over us and pulverize us. My terror at that instant was like a burning fire. The shadow in front of me was gigantic, perhaps fourteen feet high and six feet across. It moved as if it were feeling its way around with no eyes. It jerked and wobbled. I knew that it was looking for me. Pablito at that moment hid his head against my chest. The sensation that his movement produced in me dispelled some of the awesome attention that I had focused on the shadow. The shadow seemed to become disassociated, judging by its erratic jerks, and then it moved out of sight, merging with the darkness around.

I shook Pablito. He lifted his head and let out a muffled scream. I looked up. A strange man was staring at me. He seemed to have been right behind the shadow, perhaps hiding behind it. He was rather tall and lanky, he had a long face, no hair, and the left side of his head was covered by a rash or an eczema of some sort. His eyes were wild and shiny; his mouth was half open. He wore some strange pajama-like clothing; his pants were too short for him. I could not distinguish whether or not he had shoes on. He stood looking at us for what seemed to be a long time, as if waiting for an opening in order to lurch at us and tear us apart. There was so much intensity in his eyes. It was not hatred or violence but some sort of animal feeling of distrust. I could not stand the tension any longer. I wanted to adapt a fighting position that don Juan had taught me years before and I

would have done so had it not been for Pablito, who whispered that the ally could not go over the line that don Genaro had drawn on the ground. I realized then that there was indeed a bright line that seemed to detain whatever was in front of us.

After a moment the man moved away to the left, just like the shadow before. I had the sensation that don Juan and don Genaro had called them both back.

There was a short quiet pause. I could not see don Juan or don Genaro any more; they were no longer sitting on the points of the half-moon. Suddenly I heard the sound of two small pebbles hitting the solid rock floor where we were sitting, and in a flash the area in front of us lit up as if a mellow yellowish light had been turned on. In front of us there was a ravenous beast, a giant nauseating-looking coyote or wolf. Its whole body was covered with a white secretion like perspiration or saliva. Its hair was raggedy and wet. Its eyes were wild. It growled with a blind fury that sent chills through me. Its jaw shivered and globs of saliva flew all over the place. It pawed the ground like a mad dog trying to get loose from a chain. Then it stood on its hind legs and moved its front paws and its jaws rabidly. All its fury seemed to be concentrated on breaking some barrier in front of us.

I became aware that my fear of that crazed animal was of a different sort than the fear of the two apparitions I had witnessed before. My dread of that beast was a physical revulsion and horror. I looked on in utter impotence at its rage. Suddenly it seemed to lose its wildness and trotted out of sight.

I heard then something else coming towards us, or perhaps I sensed it; all of a sudden the shape of a colossal feline loomed in front of us. I first saw its eyes in the darkness; they were huge and fixed like two pools of water reflecting light. It snorted and growled softly. It exhaled air and moved back and forth in front of us without taking its eyes away from us. It did not have the electric glow that the coyote had; I could not distinguish its features clearly, and yet its presence was infinitely more ominous than the other beast's. It seemed to be gathering strength; I felt that it was so daring that it

would go beyond its limits. Pablito must have had a similar feeling, for he whispered that I should duck my head and lie almost flat against the ground. A second later the feline charged. It ran towards us and then it leaped with its paws extended forward. I closed my eyes and hid my head in my arms against the ground. I felt that the beast had ripped the protective line that don Genaro had drawn around us and was actually on top of us. I felt its weight pinning me down; the fur on its belly rubbed against my neck. It seemed that its forelegs were caught in something; it wriggled to set itself free. I felt its jerking and prodding and heard its diabolic puffing and hissing. I knew then that I was lost. I had a vague sense of a rational choice and I wanted to resign myself calmly to my fate of dying there, but I was afraid of the physical pain of dying under such awful circumstances. Then some strange force surged from my body; it was as if my body refused to die and pooled all its strength in one single point, my left arm and hand. I felt an indomitable surge coming through it. Something uncontrollable was taking possession of my body, something that forced me to push the massive malignant weight of that beast off of us. Pablito seemed to have reacted in the same fashion and we both stood up at once; there was so much energy created by both of us that the beast was flung like a rag doll.

The exertion had been supreme. I collapsed on the ground, panting for air. The muscles of my stomach were so tense that I could not breathe. I did not pay any attention to what Pablito was doing. I finally noticed that don Juan and don Genaro were helping me to sit up. I saw Pablito spread on the ground face down with his arms outstretched. He seemed to have fainted. After they had made me sit up, don Juan and don Genaro helped Pablito. Both of them rubbed his stomach and back. They made him stand up and after a while he could sit up by himself again.

Don Juan and don Genaro sat on the ends of the half-moon, and then they began to move in front of us as if a rail existed between the two points, a rail that they were using to shift their positions back and forth from one side to the other. Their movements made me dizzy. They finally stopped next to Pablito and began to whisper

in his ear. After a moment they stood up, all three of them at once, and walked to the edge of the cliff. Don Genaro lifted Pablito as if he were a child. Pablito's body was stiff like a board; don Juan held Pablito by the ankles. He whirled him around, seemingly to gain momentum and force, and finally he let go of his legs and hurled his body out over the abyss away from the edge of the cliff.

I saw Pablito's body against the dark western sky. It described circles, just like don Juan's body had done days before; the circles were slow. Pablito seemed to be gaining altitude instead of falling down. Then the circling became accelerated; Pablito's body twirled like a disk for a moment and then it disintegrated. I perceived that it had vanished in thin air.

Don Juan and don Genaro came to my side, squatted by me and proceeded to whisper in my ears. Each said something different, yet I had no trouble in following their commands. It was as if I became "split" the instant they uttered their first words. I felt that they were doing with me what they had done with Pablito. Don Genaro made me whirl and then I had the thoroughly conscious sensation of spinning or floating for a moment. Next I was rushing through the air, plummeting down to the ground at a tremendous speed. I felt, as I was falling, that my clothes were ripping off, then my flesh fell off, and finally only my head remained. I had the very clear sensation that as my body became dismembered I lost my superfluous weight, and thus my falling lost its momentum and my speed decreased. My descent was no longer a vertigo. I began to move back and forth like a leaf. Then my head was stripped of its weight and all that was left of "me" was a square centimeter, a nugget, a tiny pebblelike residue. All my feeling was concentrated there; then the nugget seemed to burst and I was a thousand pieces. I knew, or something somewhere knew, that I was aware of the thousand pieces at once. I was the awareness itself.

Then some part of that awareness began to be stirred; it rose, grew. It became localized, and little by little I regained the sense of boundaries, consciousness or whatever, and suddenly the "me" I knew and was familiar with erupted into the most spectacular view

of all the imaginable combinations of "beautiful" scenes; it was as if I were looking at thousands of pictures of the world, of people, of things.

The scenes then became blurry. I had the sensation that they were being passed in front of my eyes at a greater speed until I could not single out any of them for examination. Finally it was as if I were witnessing the organization of the world rolling past my eyes in an unbroken, endless chain.

I suddenly found myself standing on the cliff with don Juan and don Genaro. They whispered that they had pulled me back, and that I had witnessed the unknown that no one can talk about. They said that they were going to hurl me into it once more, and that I should let the wings of my perception unfold and touch the "tonal" and the "nagual" at once without being aware of going back and forth from one to the other.

I again had the sensations of being tossed, spinning, and falling down at a tremendous speed. Then I exploded. I disintegrated. Something in me gave out; it released something I had kept locked up all my life. I was thoroughly aware then that my secret reservoir had been tapped and that it poured out unrestrainedly. There was no longer the sweet unity I call "me." There was nothing and yet that nothing was filled. It was not light or darkness, hot or cold, pleasant or unpleasant. It was not that I moved or floated or was stationary, neither was I a single unit, a self, as I am accustomed to being. I was a myriad of selves which were all "me," a colony of separate units that had a special allegiance to one another and would join unavoidably to form one single awareness, my human awareness. It was not that I "knew" beyond the shadow of a doubt, because there was nothing I could have "known" with, but all my single awarenesses "knew" that the "I," the "me," of my familiar world was a colony, a conglomerate of separate and independent feelings that had an unbending solidarity to one another. The unbending solidarity of my countless awarenesses, the allegiance that those parts had for one another was my life force.

A way of describing that unified sensation would be to say that

those nuggets of awareness were scattered; each of them was aware of itself and none was more predominant than the other. Then something would stir them, and they would join and emerge onto an area where all of them had to be pooled in one clump, the "me" I know. As "me" "myself" then I would witness a coherent scene of worldly activity, or a scene that pertained to other worlds and which I thought must have been pure imagination, or a scene that pertained to "pure thinking," that is, I had views of intellectual systems, or of ideas strung together as verbalizations. In some scenes I talked to myself to my heart's content. After every one of those coherent views the "me" would disintegrate and be nothing once more.

During one of those excursions into a coherent view I found myself on the cliff with don Juan. I instantly realized that I was then the total "me" I am familiar with. I felt my physicality as real. I was in the world rather than merely viewing it.

Don Juan hugged me like a child. He looked at me. His face was very close. I could see his eyes in the darkness. They were kind. They seemed to hold a question. I knew what it was. The unspeakable was truly unspeakable.

"Well?" he asked softly, as if he would need my reaffirmation.

I was speechless. The words "numb," "bewildered," "confused," and so on were not in any way appropriate descriptions of my feelings at that moment. I was not solid. I knew that don Juan had to grab me and keep me forcibly on the ground, otherwise I would have floated in the air and disappeared. I was not afraid of vanishing. I longed for the "unknown" where my awareness was not unified.

Don Juan walked me slowly, pushing down on both of my shoulders, to an area around don Genaro's house; he made me lie down and then covered me with soft dirt from a pile that he seemed to have prepared beforehand. He covered me up to my neck. With leaves he made a sort of pillow for my head to rest on and told me not to move or fall asleep at all. He said that he was going to sit and keep me company until the earth had again consolidated my form.

I felt very comfortable and had a nearly invincible desire to fall asleep, but don Juan would not let me. He demanded that I should

talk about anything under the sun except what I had just experienced. I did not know what to talk about at first, then I asked about don Genaro. Don Juan said that don Genaro had taken Pablito and had buried him somewhere around there and was doing with him what he himself was doing with me.

I had the desire to sustain the conversation but something in me was incomplete; I had an unusual indifference, a tiredness that was more like boredom. Don Juan seemed to know how I felt. He began to talk about Pablito and how our fates were interlocked. He said that he became Pablito's benefactor at the same time that don Genaro became his teacher, and that power had paired Pablito and me step by step. He made the emphatic remark that the only difference between Pablito and me was that while Pablito's world as a warrior was governed by coercion and fear, mine was governed by affection and freedom. Don Juan explained that such a difference was due to the intrinsically different personalities of the benefactors. Don Genaro was sweet and affectionate and funny, while he himself was dry, authoritarian and direct. He said that my personality demanded a strong teacher but a tender benefactor, and that Pablito was the opposite; he needed a kind teacher and a stern benefactor.

We talked for a while longer and then it was morning. When the sun appeared over the mountains on the eastern horizon, he helped me to get up from under the dirt.

After I woke up in the early afternoon, don Juan and I sat by the door of don Genaro's house. Don Juan said that don Genaro was still with Pablito, preparing him for the last encounter.

"Tomorrow you and Pablito will go into the unknown," he said. "I must prepare you for it now. You will go into it by yourselves. Last night you two were like yo-yos being pulled back and forth; tomorrow you will be on your own."

I had then a rush of curiosity, and questions about my experiences of the night before just poured out of me. He was unruffled by my barrage.

"Today I have to accomplish a most crucial maneuver," he said. "I

have to trick you for the last time. And you must fall for my tricking."

He laughed and slapped his thighs.

"What Genaro wanted to show you with the first exercise the other night was how sorcerers use the *nagual*," he went on. "There's no way to get to the sorcerers' explanation unless one has willingly used the *nagual*, or rather, unless one has willingly used the *tonal* to make sense out of one's actions in the *nagual*. Another way of making all this clear is to say that the view of the *tonal* must prevail if one is going to use the *nagual* the way sorcerers do."

I told him that I had found a blatant incongruity in what he had just said. On the one hand, he had given me, two days before, an incredible recapitulation of his studied acts over a period of years, acts designed to affect my view of the world; and on the other hand, he wanted that same view to prevail.

"One thing has nothing to do with the other," he said. "Order in our perception is the exclusive realm of the *tonal*; only there can our actions have a sequence; only there are they like stairways where one can count the steps. There is nothing of that sort in the *nagual*. Therefore, the view of the *tonal* is a tool, and as such it is not only the best tool but the only one we've got.

"Last night your bubble of perception opened and its wings unfolded. There is nothing else to say about it. It is impossible to explain what happened to you, so I'm not going to attempt to and you shouldn't try to either. It should be enough to say that the wings of your perception were made to touch your totality. Last night you went back and forth from the *nagual* to the *tonal* time and time again. You were hurled in twice so as to leave no possibility for mistakes. The second time you experienced the full impact of the journey into the unknown. And your perception unfolded its wings when something in you realized your true nature. You are a cluster.

"This is the sorcerers' explanation. The *nagual* is the unspeakable. All the possible feelings and beings and selves float in it like barges, peaceful, unaltered, forever. Then the glue of life binds some of them together. You yourself found that out last night, and so did Pablito,

and so did Genaro the time he journeyed into the unknown, and so did I. When the glue of life binds those feelings together a being is created, a being that loses the sense of its true nature and becomes blinded by the glare and clamor of the area where beings hover, the *tonal*. The *tonal* is where all the unified organization exists. A being pops into the *tonal* once the force of life has bound all the needed feelings together. I said to you once that the *tonal* begins at birth and ends at death; I said that because I know that as soon as the force of life leaves the body all those single awarenesses disintegrate and go back again to where they came from, the *nagual*. What a warrior does in journeying into the unknown is very much like dying, except that his cluster of single feelings do not disintegrate but expand a bit without losing their togetherness. At death, however, they sink deeply and move independently as if they had never been a unit."

I wanted to tell him how completely homogeneous were his statements with my experience. But he did not let me talk.

"There is no way to refer to the unknown," he said. "One can only witness it. The sorcerers' explanation says that each of us has a center from which the *nagual* can be witnessed, the *will*. Thus, a warrior can venture into the *nagual* and let his cluster arrange and rearrange itself in any way possible. I've said to you that the expression of the *nagual* is a personal matter. I meant that it is up to the individual warrior himself to direct the arrangement and rearrangements of that cluster. The human form or human feeling is the original one, perhaps it is the sweetest form of them all to us; there are, however, an endless number of alternative forms which the cluster may adopt. I've said to you that a sorcerer can adopt any form he wants. That is true. A sorcerer who is in possession of the totality of himself can direct the parts of his cluster to join in any conceivable way. The force of life is what makes all that shuffling possible. Once the force of life is exhausted there is no way to reassemble that cluster.

"I have called that cluster the bubble of perception. I have also said that it is sealed, closed tightly, and that it never opens until the moment of our death. Yet it could be made to open. Sorcerers have obviously learned that secret, and although not all of them arrive at

the totality of themselves, they know about the possibility of it. They know that the bubble opens only when one plunges into the *nagual*. Yesterday I gave you a recapitulation of all the steps that you have followed to arrive at that point."

He scrutinized me as if he were waiting for a comment or a question. What he had said was beyond comment. I understood then that it would have been of no consequence if he had told me everything fourteen years before, or if he would have told it to me at any point during my apprenticeship. What was important was the fact that I had experienced with or in my body the premises of his explanation.

"I'm waiting for your usual question," he said, voicing his words slowly.

"What question?" I asked.

"The one your *reason* is itching to voice."

"Today I relinquish all questions. I really don't have any, don Juan."

"That's not fair," he said, laughing. "There is one particular question that I need you to ask."

He said that if I would shut off my internal dialogue for just an instant I could discern what the question was. I had a sudden thought, a momentary insight, and I knew what he wanted.

"Where was my body while all that was happening to me, don Juan?" I asked and he broke into a belly laugh.

"This is the last of the sorcerers' tricks," he said. "Let's say that what I'm going to reveal to you is the last bit of the sorcerers' explanation. Up to this point your *reason* has haphazardly followed my doings. Your *reason* is willing to admit that the world is not as the description portrays it, that there is much more to it than what meets the eye. Your *reason* is almost willing and ready to admit that your perception went up and down that cliff, or that something in you or even all of you leaped to the bottom of the gorge and examined with the eyes of the *tonal* what was there, as if you had descended bodily with a rope and ladder. That act of examining the bottom of the gorge was the crown of all these years of training. You did it well. Genaro saw the cubic centimeter of chance when he threw a rock at

the *you* that was at the bottom of the ravine. You *saw* everything. Genaro and I knew then without a doubt that you were ready to be hurled into the unknown. At that instant you not only *saw*, but you knew all about the double, the other."

I interrupted and told him that he was giving me undeserving credit for something that was beyond my understanding. His reply was that I needed time to let all those impressions settle down, and that once I had done that, answers would just pour out of me in the same manner that questions had poured out of me in the past.

"The secret of the double is in the bubble of perception, which in your case that night was at the top of the cliff and at the bottom of the gorge at the same time," he said. "The cluster of feelings can be made to assemble instantly anywhere. In other words, one can perceive the *here* and the *there* at once."

He urged me to think and remember a sequence of actions which he said were so ordinary that I had almost forgotten them.

I did not know what he was talking about. He coaxed me to try harder.

"Think about your hat," he said. "And think what Genaro did with it."

I had a shocking moment of realization. I had forgotten that don Genaro had actually wanted me to take off my hat because it kept on falling off, blown by the wind. But I did not want to let go of it. I had felt stupid being naked. Wearing a hat, which I ordinarily never do, gave me a sense of strangeness; I was not really myself, in which case being without clothes was not so embarrassing. Don Genaro had then attempted to change hats with me, but his was too small for my head. He made jokes about the size of my head and the proportions of my body, and finally he took my hat off and wrapped my head with an old poncho, like a turban.

I told don Juan that I had forgotten about that sequence, which I was sure had happened in between my so-called leaps. And yet the memory of those "leaps" stood as a unit which was uninterrupted.

"They certainly were an uninterrupted unit, and so was Genaro's cavorting with your hat," he said. "Those two memories cannot be

made to go one after the other because they happened at the same time."

He made the fingers of his left hand move as if they could not fit into the spaces between the fingers of his right hand.

"Those leaps were only the beginning," he went on. "Then came your true excursion into the unknown; last night you experienced the unspeakable, the *nagual*. Your *reason* cannot fight the physical knowledge that you are a nameless cluster of feelings. Your *reason* at this point might even admit that there is another center of assemblage, the *will*, through which it is possible to judge or assess and use the extraordinary effects of the *nagual*. It has finally dawned on your *reason* that one can reflect the *nagual* through the *will*, although one can never explain it.

"But then comes your question, 'Where was I when all that was taking place? Where was my body?' The conviction that there is a real *you* is a result of the fact that you have rallied everything you've got around your *reason*. At this point your *reason* admits that the *nagual* is the indescribable, not because the evidence has convinced it, but because it is safe to admit that. Your *reason* is on safe ground, all the elements of the *tonal* are on its side."

Don Juan paused and examined me. His smile was kind.

"Let's go to Genaro's place of predilection," he said abruptly.

He stood up and we walked to the rock where we had talked two days before; we sat comfortably on the same spots with our backs against the rock.

"To make *reason* feel safe is always the task of the teacher," he said. "I've tricked your *reason* into believing that the *tonal* was accountable and predictable. Genaro and I have labored to give you the impression that only the *nagual* was beyond the scope of explanation; the proof that the tricking was successful is that at this moment it seems to you that in spite of everything you have gone through, there is still a core that you can claim as your own, your *reason*. That's a mirage. Your precious *reason* is only a center of assemblage, a mirror that reflects something which is outside of it. Last night you witnessed not only the indescribable *nagual* but also the indescribable *tonal*.

"The last piece of the sorcerers' explanation says that *reason* is merely reflecting an outside order, and that *reason* knows nothing about that order; it cannot explain it, in the same way it cannot explain the *nagual*. *Reason* can only witness the effects of the *tonal*, but never ever could it understand it, or unravel it. The very fact that we are thinking and talking points out an order that we follow without ever knowing how we do that, or what the order is."

I brought up then the idea of Western man's research into the workings of the brain as a possibility of explaining what that order was. He pointed out that all that that research did was to attest that something was happening.

"Sorcerers do the same thing with their *will*," he said. "They say that through the *will* they can witness the effects of the *nagual*. I can add now that through *reason*, no matter what we do with it, or how we do it, we are merely witnessing the effects of the *tonal*. In both cases there is no hope, ever, to understand or to explain what it is that we are witnessing.

"Last night was the first time that you flew on the wings of your perception. You were still very timid. You ventured only on the band of human perception. A sorcerer can use those wings to touch other sensibilities, a crow's for instance, a coyote's, a cricket's, or the order of other worlds in that infinite space."

"Do you mean other planets, don Juan?"

"Certainly. The wings of perception can take us to the most recondite confines of the *nagual* or to inconceivable worlds of the *tonal*."

"Can a sorcerer go to the moon, for instance?"

"Of course he can," he replied. "But he wouldn't be able to bring back a bag of rocks, though."

We laughed and joked about it but his statement had been made in ultimate seriousness.

"We have arrived at the last part of the sorcerers' explanation," he said. "Last night Genaro and I showed you the last two points that make the totality of man, the *nagual* and the *tonal*. I once told you that those two points were outside of oneself and yet they were not. That is the paradox of the luminous beings. The *tonal* of every one of

us is but a reflection of that indescribable unknown filled with order; the *nagual* of every one of us is but a reflection of that indescribable void that contains everything.

"Now you should sit on Genaro's place of predilection until twilight; by then you should have pounded the sorcerers' explanation into place. As you sit here now, you have nothing except the force of your life that binds that cluster of feelings."

He stood up.

"Tomorrow's task is to plunge into the unknown by yourself while Genaro and I watch you without intervening," he said. "Sit here and turn off your internal dialogue. You may gather the power needed to unfold the wings of your perception and fly to that infinitude."

THE PREDILECTION OF TWO WARRIORS

Don Juan woke me up at the crack of dawn. He handed me a carrying gourd filled with water and a bag of dry meat. We walked in silence for a couple of miles to the place where I had left my car two days before.

"This journey is our last journey together," he said in a quiet voice when we arrived at my car.

I felt a strong jolt in my stomach. I knew what he meant.

He leaned against the back fender as I opened the passenger door and he looked at me with a feeling that had never been there before. We got in the car but before I started the motor he made some obscure remarks that I also understood to perfection; he said that we had a few minutes to sit in the car and touch again upon some feelings very personal and poignant.

I sat quietly but my spirit was restless. I wanted to say something to him, something that would have essentially soothed me. I searched in vain for the appropriate words, the formula that would have expressed the thing I "knew" without being told.

Don Juan talked about a little boy that I once knew, and about how my feelings for him would not change with the years or the distance. Don Juan said that he was certain that every time I thought of that little boy my spirit jumped joyfully and without a trace of selfishness or pettiness wished him the best.

He reminded me of a story that I had once told him about the little boy, a story which he had liked and had found to have a profound meaning. During one of our hikes in the mountains around Los

Angeles the little boy had gotten tired of walking, so I had let him ride on my shoulders. A wave of intense happiness engulfed us then and the little boy shouted his thanks to the sun and to the mountains.

"That was his way of saying good-by to you," don Juan said.

I felt the sting of anguish in my throat.

"There are many ways of saying farewell," he said. "The best way is perhaps by holding a particular memory of joyfulness. For instance, if you live like a warrior, the warmth you felt when the little boy rode on your shoulders will be fresh and cutting for as long as you live. That is a warrior's way of saying farewell."

I hurriedly turned on the motor and drove faster than usual on the hard-packed rocky ground until we got onto the unpaved road.

We drove a short distance and then we walked the rest of the way. After about an hour we came to a grove of trees. Don Genaro, Pablito, and Nestor were there waiting for us. I greeted them. All of them appeared to be so happy and vigorous. As I looked at them and at don Juan I was overcome by a feeling of profound empathy for all of them. Don Genaro embraced me and patted me affectionately on the back. He told Nestor and Pablito that I had had a fine performance leaping into the bottom of a ravine. With his hand still on my shoulder he addressed them in a loud voice.

"Yes sir," he said, looking at them. "I'm his benefactor and I know that that was quite an achievement. That was the crown of years of living like a warrior."

He turned to me and placed his other hand on my shoulder. His eyes were shiny and peaceful.

"There's nothing I can say to you, Carlitos," he said, voicing his words slowly. "Except that you had an extraordinary amount of excrement in your bowels."

With that he and don Juan howled with laughter until they seemed about to pass out. Pablito and Nestor giggled nervously, not knowing exactly what to do.

When don Juan and don Genaro had quieted down, Pablito said to me that he was unsure of his capability of going into the "unknown" by himself.

"I really don't have the faintest idea of how to do it," he said.

"Genaro says that one needs nothing except impeccability. What do you think?"

I told him that I knew even less than he did. Nestor sighed and seemed truly concerned; he moved his hands and his mouth nervously as if he were on the verge of saying something important and did not know how.

"Genaro says that you two will make it," he finally said.

Don Genaro signaled with his hand that we were leaving. He and don Juan walked together, a few yards ahead of us. We followed the same mountain trail nearly all day. We walked in complete silence and never stopped. All of us had a provision of dry meat and a gourd of water, and it was understood that we would eat as we walked. At a certain point the trail definitely became a road. It curved around the side of a mountain and suddenly the view of a valley opened up in front of us. It was a breath-taking sight, a long green valley glimmering in sunlight; there were two magnificent rainbows over it and patches of rain all over the surrounding hills.

Don Juan stopped walking and jutted his chin to point out something down in the valley to don Genaro. Don Genaro shook his head. It was not an affirmative or negative gesture; it was more like a jerk of his head. They both stood motionless peering into the valley for a long time.

We left the road there and took what seemed to be a short cut. We began to descend via a more narrow and hazardous path that led to the northern part of the valley.

When we reached the flatland, it was midafternoon. The strong scent of river willows and moist dirt enveloped me. For a moment the rain was like a soft green rumble on the nearby trees to my left, then it was only a quivering in the reeds. I heard the rustling of a stream. I stopped for a moment to listen. I looked at the top of the trees; the high cirrus clouds on the western horizon looked like puffs of cotton scattered in the sky. I stood there watching the clouds long enough for everyone else to get quite a bit ahead of me. I ran after them.

Don Juan and don Genaro stopped and turned around in unison; their eyes moved and focused on me with such uniformity and

precision that they seemed to be one single person. It was a brief stupendous glance that sent chills through my back. Then don Genaro laughed and said that I ran thumping, like a three-hundred-pound flat-footed Mexican.

"Why a Mexican?" don Juan asked.

"A flat-footed three-hundred-pound Indian doesn't run," don Genaro said in an explanatory tone.

"Oh," don Juan said as if don Genaro had really explained something.

We crossed the narrow lush green valley and climbed into the mountains to the east. By late afternoon we finally came to a halt on top of a flat barren mesa that overlooked a high valley towards the south. The vegetation had changed drastically. There were round eroded mountains all around. The land in the valley and on the sides of the hills was parceled and cultivated and yet the entire scene gave me the feeling of barrenness.

The sun was already low on the southwest horizon. Don Juan and don Genaro called us to the northern edge of the mesa. From that point the view was sublime. There were endless valleys and mountains towards the north and a range of high sierras towards the west. The sunlight reflecting on the distant northern mountains made them look orange, like the color of the banks of clouds over the west. The scenery, in spite of its beauty, was sad and lonely.

Don Juan handed me my writing pad, but I did not feel like taking notes. We sat in a half circle with don Juan and don Genaro at the ends.

"You started on the path of knowledge writing, and you will finish the same way," don Juan said.

All of them urged me to write, as if my writing were essential.

"You're at the very edge, Carlitos," don Genaro said suddenly. "You and Pablito both."

His voice was soft. Without his joking tone, he sounded kind and worried.

"Other warriors journeying into the unknown have stood on this very spot," he went on. "They all wish you two very well."

I felt a ripple around me as if the air had been half solid and some-

thing had created a wave that rippled through it.

"All of us here wish you two well," he said.

Nestor embraced Pablito and me and then he sat apart from us.

"We still have some time," don Genaro said, looking at the sky. And then turning to Nestor, he asked, "What should we do in the meantime?"

"We should laugh and enjoy ourselves," Nestor answered briskly.

I told don Juan that I was afraid of what was waiting for me, and that I had most certainly been tricked into all that; I who had not even imagined that situations like the one Pablito and I were living existed. I said that something truly awesome had taken possession of me and little by little had pushed me until I was facing something perhaps worse than death.

"You're complaining," don Juan said dryly. "You're feeling sorry for yourself to the last minute."

They all laughed. He was right. What an invincible urge! And I thought I had vanquished it from my life. I begged all of them to forgive my idiocy.

"Don't apologize," don Juan said to me. "Apologies are nonsense. What really matters is being an impeccable warrior in this unique place of power. This place has harbored the finest warriors. Be as fine as they were."

Then he addressed both Pablito and me.

"You already know that this is the last task in which we will be together," he said. "You will enter into the *nagual* and the *tonal* by the force of your personal power alone. Genaro and I are here only to bid you farewell. Power has determined that Nestor should be a witness. So be it.

"This will also be the last crossroad of yours which Genaro and I will attend. Once you have entered the unknown by yourselves you cannot depend on us to bring you back, so a decision is mandatory; you must decide whether or not to return. We are confident that you two have the strength to return if you choose to do so. The other night you were perfectly capable, in unison or separately, to throw off the ally that otherwise would have crushed you to death. That was a test of your strength.

"I must also add that few warriors survive the encounter with the unknown that you are about to have; not so much because it is hard, but because the *nagual* is enticing beyond any statement, and warriors who are journeying into it find that to return to the *tonal*, or to the world of order and noise and pain, is a most unappealing affair.

"The decision to stay or to return is done by something in us which is neither our *reason* nor our desire, but our *will*, so there is no way of knowing the outcome of it beforehand.

"If you choose not to return you will disappear as if the earth had swallowed you. But if you choose to return to this earth you must wait like true warriors until your particular tasks are finished. Once they are finished, either in success or defeat, you will have the command over the totality of yourselves."

Don Juan paused for a moment. Don Genaro looked at me and winked.

"Carlitos wants to know what it means to have command over the totality of oneself," he said, and everybody laughed.

He was right. Under other circumstances I would have asked about it; the situation, however, was too solemn for questions.

"It means that the warrior has finally encountered power," don Juan said. "No one can tell what each warrior would do with it; perhaps you two will roam peacefully and unnoticed on the face of the earth, or perhaps you will turn out to be hateful men, or perhaps notorious, or kind. All that depends on the impeccability and the freedom of your spirit.

"The important thing, however, is your task. That is the bestowal made by a teacher and a benefactor to their apprentices. I pray that you two will succeed in bringing your tasks to a culmination."

"Waiting to fulfill that task is a very special waiting," don Genaro said all of a sudden. "And I'm going to tell you the story of a band of warriors who lived in another time on the mountains, somewhere in that direction."

He casually pointed to the east, but then, after a moment's hesitation, he seemed to change his mind and stood up and pointed to the distant northern mountains.

"No. They lived in that direction," he said, looking at me and

smiling with an air of erudition. "Exactly one hundred and thirty-five kilometers from here."

Don Genaro was perhaps imitating me. His mouth and forehead were contracted, his hands were tightly clasped against his chest holding some imaginary object that he may have intended to be a notebook. He maintained a most ridiculous posture. I had once met a German scholar, a Sinologist, who looked exactly like that. The thought that all along I might have been unconsciously imitating the grimaces of a German Sinologist was utterly funny to me. I laughed by myself. It seemed to be a joke just for me.

Don Genaro sat down again and proceeded with his story.

"Whenever a member of that band of warriors was thought to have committed an act which was against their rules, his fate was put to the decision of all of them. The culprit had to explain his reasons for having done what he did. His comrades had to listen to him; and then they either disbanded because they had found his reasons convincing, or they lined up with their weapons at the very edge of a flat mountain very much like this mountain where we are sitting now, ready to carry out his death sentence because they had found his reasons to be unacceptable. In that case the condemned warrior had to say good-by to his old comrades, and his execution began."

Don Genaro looked at me and Pablito as if waiting for a sign from us. Then he turned to Nestor.

"Perhaps the witness here could tell us what the story has to do with these two," he said to Nestor.

Nestor smiled shyly and seemed to immerse himself deep in thought for a moment.

"The witness has no idea," he said and broke up into a nervous giggle.

Don Genaro asked everyone to stand up and go with him to look over the west edge of the mesa.

There was a mild slope down to the bottom of the land formation, then there was a narrow flat strip of land ending in a crevice that seemed to be a natural channel for the runoff of rain water.

"Right where that ditch is, there was a row of trees on the moun-

tain in the story," he said. "Beyond that point there was a thick forest.

"After saying good-by to his comrades, the condemned warrior was supposed to begin walking down the slope towards the trees. His comrades then cocked their weapons and aimed at him. If no one shot, or if the warrior survived his wounds and reached the edge of the trees, he was free."

We went back to the place where we had been sitting.

"How about now, witness?" he asked Nestor. "Can you tell?"

Nestor was the epitome of nervousness. He took off his hat and scratched his head. He then hid his face in his hands.

"How can the poor witness know?" he finally retorted in a challenging tone and laughed with everybody else.

"They say that there were men who pulled through unharmed," don Genaro continued. "Let's say that their personal power affected their comrades. A wave went through them as they were aiming at him and no one dared to use his weapon. Or perhaps they were in awe of his bravery and could not harm him."

Don Genaro looked at me and then at Pablito.

"There was a condition set up for that walk to the edge of the trees," he went on. "The warrior had to walk calmly, unaffected. His steps had to be sure and firm, his eyes looking straight ahead, peacefully. He had to go down without stumbling, without turning to look back, and above all without running."

Don Genaro paused; Pablito assented to his words by nodding.

"If you two decide to return to this earth," he said, "you will have to wait like true warriors until your tasks are fulfilled. That waiting is very much like the walk of the warrior in the story. You see, the warrior had run out of human time and so have you. The only difference is in who is aiming at you. Those who were aiming at the warrior were his warrior comrades. But what's aiming at you two is the unknown. Your only chance is your impeccability. You must wait without looking back. You must wait without expecting rewards. And you must aim all of your personal power at fulfilling your tasks.

"If you don't act impeccably, if you begin to fret and get impatient

and desperate, you'll be cut down mercilessly by the sharpshooters from the unknown.

"If, on the other hand, your impeccability and personal power are such that you are capable of fulfilling your tasks, you will then achieve the promise of power. And what's that promise? you may ask. It is a promise that power makes to men as luminous beings. Each warrior has a different fate, so there is no way of telling what that promise will be for either of you."

The sun was about to set. The light orange color on the distant northern mountains had become darker. The scenery gave me the feeling of a windswept lonely world.

"You have learned that the backbone of a warrior is to be humble and efficient," don Genaro said and his voice made me jump. "You have learned to act without expecting anything in return. Now I tell you that in order to withstand what lies ahead of you beyond this day, you'll need your ultimate forbearance."

I experienced a shock in my stomach. Pablito began to shiver quietly.

"A warrior must be always ready," he said. "The fate of all of us here has been to know that we are the prisoners of power. No one knows why us in particular, but what a great fortune!"

Don Genaro stopped talking and lowered his head as if he were exhausted. That had been the first time that I had heard him speak in such terms.

"It is mandatory here that a warrior says good-by to all those present and to all those he leaves behind," don Juan said suddenly. "He must do this in his own words and loudly, so his voice will remain here forever in this place of power."

Don Juan's voice brought forth another dimension to my state of being at that moment. Our conversation in the car became all the more poignant. How right he was when he had said that the serenity of the scenery around us was only a mirage and that the sorcerers' explanation delivered a blow that no one could parry. I had heard the sorcerers' explanation and I had experienced its premises; and there I was, more naked and more helpless than ever in my entire life.

Nothing that I had ever done, nothing that I had ever imagined, could even compare to the anguish and the loneliness of that moment. The sorcerers' explanation had stripped me even of my "reason." Don Juan was right again when he said that a warrior could not avoid pain and grief but only the indulging in them. At that moment my sadness was uncontainable. I could not stand to say good-by to those who had shared with me the turns of my fate. I told don Juan and don Genaro that I had made a pact with someone to die together and that my spirit could not bear to leave alone.

"We are all alone, Carlitos," don Genaro said softly. "That's our condition."

I felt in my throat the anguish of my passion for life and for those close to me; I refused to say good-by to them.

"We are alone," don Juan said. "But to die alone is not to die in loneliness."

His voice sounded muffled and dry, like coughing.

Pablito wept quietly. Then he stood up and spoke. It was not a harangue or a testimonial. In a clear voice he thanked don Genaro and don Juan for their kindness. He turned to Nestor and thanked him for having given him the opportunity to take care of him. He wiped his eyes with his sleeve.

"What a wonderful thing it was to be in this beautiful world! In this marvelous time!" he exclaimed and sighed.

His mood was overwhelming.

"If I don't return I beg you as an ultimate favor to help those who have shared my fate," he said to don Genaro.

He then turned towards the west in the direction of his home. His lean body convulsed with tears. He ran towards the edge of the mesa with outstretched arms as if he were running to embrace someone. His lips moved, he seemed to be talking in a low voice.

I turned my head away. I did not want to hear what Pablito was saying.

He came back to where we were sitting, slumped down next to me, and lowered his head.

I was incapable of saying a thing. But then an outside force

seemed to take over and made me stand up, and I too spoke my thanks and my sadness.

We were quiet again. A north wind hissed softly, blowing in my face. Don Juan looked at me. I had never seen so much kindness in his eyes. He said to me that a warrior said farewell by thanking all those who had had a gesture of kindness or concern for him, and that I had to voice my gratitude not only to them but also to those who had taken care of me and had helped me on my way.

I faced the northwest, towards Los Angeles, and all the sentimentality of my spirit poured out. What a purifying release it was to voice my thanks!

I sat down again. No one looked at me.

"A warrior acknowledges his pain but he doesn't indulge in it," don Juan said. "Thus the mood of a warrior who enters into the unknown is not one of sadness; on the contrary, he's joyful because he feels humbled by his great fortune, confident that his spirit is impeccable, and above all, fully aware of his efficiency. A warrior's joyfulness comes from having accepted his fate, and from having truthfully assessed what lies ahead of him."

There was a long pause. My sadness was paramount. I wanted to do something to get out of such oppressiveness.

"Witness, please squeeze your spirit catcher," don Genaro said to Nestor.

I heard the loud, most ludicrous sound of Nestor's contraption.

Pablito nearly got hysterical laughing, and so did don Juan and don Genaro. I noticed a peculiar smell and realized then that Nestor had farted. What was horrendously funny was the expression of ultimate seriousness on his face. He had farted not as a joke but because he did not have his spirit catcher with him. He was being helpful in the best way he could.

All of them laughed with abandon. What facility they had for shifting from sublime situations to utterly ludicrous ones.

Pablito turned to me suddenly. He wanted to know if I was a poet, but before I could answer his question don Genaro made a rhyme.

"Carlitos is really cool; he's got a bit of a poet, a nut and a fool," he said.

They all had another outburst of laughter.

"That's a better mood," don Juan said. "And now, before Genaro and I say good-by to you, you two may say anything you please. It might be the last time you utter a word, ever."

Pablito shook his head negatively, but I had something to say. I wanted to express my admiration, my awe for the exquisite temper of don Juan and don Genaro's warrior spirit. But I became entangled in my words and ended up saying nothing; or even worse yet, I ended up sounding as if I were complaining again.

Don Juan shook his head and smacked his lips in mock disapproval. I laughed involuntarily; it did not matter, however, that I had flubbed my chance to tell them of my admiration. A very intriguing sensation began to take possession of me. I had a sense of exhilaration and joy, an exquisite freedom that made me laugh. I told don Juan and don Genaro that I did not give a fig about the outcome of my encounter with the "unknown," that I was happy and complete, and that whether I lived or died was of no importance to me at that moment.

Don Juan and don Genaro seemed to enjoy my assertions even more than I did. Don Juan slapped his thigh and laughed. Don Genaro threw his hat on the floor and yelled as if he were riding a wild horse.

"We have enjoyed ourselves and laughed while waiting, just as the witness recommended," don Genaro said all of a sudden. "But it is the natural condition of order that it should always come to an end."

He looked at the sky.

"It's almost time for us to disband like the warriors in the story," he said. "But before we go our separate ways I must tell you two one last thing. I am going to disclose to you a warrior's secret. Perhaps you can call it a warrior's predilection."

He addressed me in particular and said that once I had told him that the life of a warrior was cold and lonely and devoid of feelings. He even added that at that precise moment I was convinced that it was so.

"The life of a warrior cannot possibly be cold and lonely and without feelings," he said, "because it is based on his affection, his

devotion, his dedication to his beloved. And who, you may ask, is his beloved? I will show you now."

Don Genaro stood up and walked slowly to a perfectly flat area right in front of us, ten or twelve feet away. He made a strange gesture there. He moved his hands as if he were sweeping dust from his chest and his stomach. Then an odd thing happened. A flash of an almost imperceptible light went through him; it came from the ground and seemed to kindle his entire body. He did a sort of backward pirouette, a backward dive more properly speaking, and landed on his chest and arms. His movement had been executed with such precision and skill that he seemed to be a weightless being, a wormlike creature that had turned on itself. When he was on the ground he performed a series of unearthly movements. He glided just a few inches above the ground, or rolled on it as if he were lying on ball bearings; or he swam on it describing circles and turning with the swiftness and agility of an eel swimming in the ocean.

My eyes began to cross at one moment and then without any transition I was watching a ball of luminosity sliding back and forth on something that appeared to be the floor of an ice-skating rink with a thousand lights shining on it.

The sight was sublime. Then the ball of fire came to rest and stayed motionless. A voice shook me and dispelled my attention. It was don Juan talking. I could not understand at first what he was saying. I looked again at the ball of fire; I could distinguish only don Genaro lying on the ground with his arms and legs spread out.

Don Juan's voice was very clear. It seemed to trigger something in me and I began to write.

"Genaro's love is the world," he said. "He was just now embracing this enormous earth but since he's so little all he can do is swim in it. But the earth knows that Genaro loves it and it bestows on him its care. That's why Genaro's life is filled to the brim and his state, wherever he'll be, will be plentiful. Genaro roams on the paths of his love and, wherever he is, he is complete."

Don Juan squatted in front of us. He caressed the ground gently.

"This is the predilection of two warriors," he said. "This earth,

this world. For a warrior there can be no greater love."

Don Genaro stood up and squatted next to don Juan for a moment while both of them peered fixedly at us, then they sat in unison, cross-legged.

"Only if one loves this earth with unbending passion can one release one's sadness," don Juan said. "A warrior is always joyful because his love is unalterable and his beloved, the earth, embraces him and bestows upon him inconceivable gifts. The sadness belongs only to those who hate the very thing that gives shelter to their beings."

Don Juan again caressed the ground with tenderness.

"This lovely being, which is alive to its last recesses and understands every feeling, soothed me, it cured me of my pains, and finally when I had fully understood my love for it, it taught me freedom."

He paused. The silence around us was frightening. The wind hissed softly and then I heard the distant barking of a lone dog.

"Listen to that barking," don Juan went on. "That is the way my beloved earth is helping me now to bring this last point to you. That barking is the saddest thing one can hear."

We were quiet for a moment. The barking of that lone dog was so sad and the stillness around us so intense that I experienced a numbing anguish. It made me think of my own life, my sadness, my not knowing where to go, what to do.

"That dog's barking is the nocturnal voice of a man," don Juan said. "It comes from a house in that valley towards the south. A man is shouting through his dog, since they are companion slaves for life, his sadness, his boredom. He's begging his death to come and release him from the dull and dreary chains of his life."

Don Juan's words had caught a most disturbing line in me. I felt he was speaking directly to me.

"That barking, and the loneliness it creates, speaks of the feelings of men," he went on. "Men for whom an entire life was like one Sunday afternoon, an afternoon which was not altogether miserable, but rather hot and dull and uncomfortable. They sweated and fussed a great deal. They didn't know where to go, or what to do. That after-

noon left them only with the memory of petty annoyances and tedium, and then suddenly it was over; it was already night."

He recounted a story I had once told him about a seventy-two-year-old man who complained that his life had been so short that it seemed to him that it was only the day before that he was a boy. The man had said to me, "I remember the pajamas I used to wear when I was ten years old. It seems that only one day has passed. Where did the time go?"

"The antidote that kills that poison is here," don Juan said, caressing the ground. "The sorcerers' explanation cannot at all liberate the spirit. Look at you two. You have gotten to the sorcerers' explanation, but it doesn't make any difference that you know it. You're more alone than ever, because without an unwavering love for the being that gives you shelter, aloneness is loneliness.

"Only the love for this splendorous being can give freedom to a warrior's spirit; and freedom is joy, efficiency, and abandon in the face of any odds. That is the last lesson. It is always left for the very last moment, for the moment of ultimate solitude when a man faces his death and his aloneness. Only then does it make sense."

Don Juan and don Genaro stood up and stretched their arms and arched their backs, as if sitting had made their bodies stiff. My heart began to pound fast. They made Pablito and me stand up.

"The twilight is the crack between the worlds," don Juan said. "It is the door to the unknown."

He pointed with a sweeping movement of his hand to the mesa where we were standing.

"This is the plateau in front of that door."

He pointed then to the northern edge of the mesa.

"There is the door. Beyond, there is an abyss and beyond that abyss is the unknown."

Don Juan and don Genaro then turned to Pablito and said good-by to him. Pablito's eyes were dilated and fixed; tears were rolling down his cheeks.

I heard don Genaro's voice saying good-by to me, but I did not hear don Juan's.

Don Juan and don Genaro moved towards Pablito and whispered briefly in his ears. Then they came to me. But before they had whispered anything I already had that peculiar feeling of being split.

"We will now be like dust on the road," don Genaro said. "Perhaps it will get in your eyes again, someday."

Don Juan and don Genaro stepped back and seemed to merge with the darkness. Pablito held my forearm and we said good-by to each other. Then a strange urge, a force, made me run with him to the northern edge of the mesa. I felt his arm holding me as we jumped and then I was alone.

"Castaneda has become one of the godfathers of the New Age movement. . . . He is addressing the central issues of our time."

—Los Angeles Times

In 1960, while waiting for a Greyhound bus in Arizona, Carlos Castaneda first encountered the man who would change his life forever—don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian shaman from Sonora, Mexico. A year later, Castaneda—then an anthropology student researching medicinal plants—again sought out don Juan and began a formal apprenticeship in the uses of hallucinogenic drugs, Indian sorcery, and mythology. Castaneda's initial experiences are recounted in *The Teachings of Don Juan*, which started as his master's thesis but went on to become one of the best-selling books of the early 1970s—making cult figures of both its author and its subject. Their story continues in *A Separate Reality*, which traces Castaneda's second cycle of apprenticeship and his attempts to shed his rational worldview. And in *Tales of Power*, which represents the culmination of Castaneda's training, he must confront a series of dazzling tricks, visions, and lessons in an effort to master the sorcerer's ways. Though in the end Castaneda finally learns to "see" don Juan's "separate reality" and to fly on the wings of his own perception, the completion of his arduous apprenticeship is not so much a conclusion as a beginning—an initiation into

CARLOS tory is obscure. He was bor t immigrated to the United S ceived his B.A. in anthropo ty of California, Los Angeles i , his M.A. two years later, and his Ph.D. in 1970. He has published nine books to date, including *The Second Ring of Power*, *The Fire from Within* and *The Art of Dreaming*.

612-BAC-611

Cover design by Monica Elias • Cover illustration by Scott Picunko
Printed in U.S.A.